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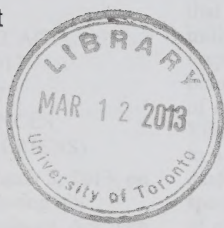
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature



**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 7 March 2013

Jeudi 7 mars 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller



1997-1998

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 7 March 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 7 mars 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 5, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / *Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président. I had the pleasure to start my lead last Tuesday, and I take it that I have 36 minutes left on the clock to complete this.

I spent the first part explaining how what the government has done is basically what I described as giving itself a bigger stick. That is, really, the bill goes through—and I will go through step by step—making sure that the government has every tool at their disposal if Ornge was ever to not follow a government order. But what is also clear is that the other part of the ledger—that is, to give people a say—has not been touched on.

So in the first part of the debate, I agree that this bill gives the government new power to bring Ornge in line. But what it fails to do, in part, is that it fails to give people a say into making sure that this agency complies with what is expected of it. The bigger picture of this bill is that nothing in there could lead us to believe that anything has been learned from Ornge. If anybody thinks that what happened at Ornge will happen again at Ornge—the chances of that are rather slim. But the chance of what happened at Ornge happening in one of the thousands of transfer payment agencies of the Ministry of Health, maybe as we speak—that's a far greater risk. That risk is there, I would say it is imminent, and unfortunately I wouldn't be surprised if the series of failings from the government side, from the ministry that allowed Ornge to do what they did, that allowed the fiasco at

Ornge—that series of failings could very well be happening as we speak.

But here we are, with Bill 11. The number has changed, but frankly the content is identical to what we had seen. For people who are not following Ornge as closely as I do, in March 2012 the Auditor General released a special report called Ornge Air Ambulance and Related Services. It was a scathing report. It showed that Dr. Mazza, the head of Ornge, was paid over \$1 million a year for his services. It showed the use of taxpayers' money in ways that cannot be imagined, to the point that the OPP were called in to do an investigation of fraud, corruption, wrongdoing and breaking the laws. You can see it all when you look through what happened to all our money at Ornge. But the main thing that the Auditor General told us is that the government—more specifically the Ministry of Health—had failed in its duty of oversight. Had the existing measure of oversight been applied, Ornge would have never been able to follow that path.

What was the government's response on the same day that the Auditor General came out with the scathing report? They released the air ambulance act. It was, in the lingo of this place, a way to change the channel, a way to say, "We know that things are bad, but here, we're making them better." At the time, I was a little bit lenient because they had put that together in haste and were trying to improve things. But that was a year ago, Mr. Speaker. For the last year, we've learned an awful lot. We've debated this bill in the House before and told them of the failings of this bill, but this bill did not change. It is identical, word for word, to when it was presented back in March 2012.

I will go through the bill and tell you some of the good, some of the bad and some of the downright ugly side of this bill before I conclude my remarks.

The first part is that they are talking about being able to appoint people to the board of directors.

For thousands of transfer payment agencies of the government throughout, people, you and I, go through an election process at an annual general meeting and we select people who sit on the boards of those different agencies.

I was the executive director of a community health centre before I took this position. Once a year, we would send a public announcement and invite people to come and join our board. Then the members of the corporation, of the community health centre where I worked, would get together once a year and they would elect people to sit on the board. This is common practice. We see it

throughout. So whether we talk about a women's shelter, a community health centre, a hospital, this is what happens quite often.

Now the government has given itself extra power: They would supersede the wish of the community and appoint some of their own people directly. I would say, sure, it is a way to—what I describe as giving the minister a bigger stick. Is it necessary for Ornge right now? I would tell you, probably not. There is such a big spotlight that has been shone on this agency that they will tend to be squeaky clean going on. Is it harmful? Probably not that much, but it does set a precedent that in certain communities, the wish of the community would be superseded by the wish of the ministry.

I represent people in northern Ontario. The wish of a ministry based out of Toronto does not always line up with the wish of the multiple communities throughout Ontario. It seems like the further away from Toronto that community is, the further away the wishes are aligned.

So they've done this. Am I going to vote against the bill just for this? Probably not. Do I feel that it is necessary? Probably not. Will it ever be used at Ornge? Not much chance of that.

0910

The government also has given itself the right to issue directives. So they would issue a directive to the air ambulance service—that's what Ornge is; it's an air ambulance service—and then those directives would need to be followed. Here again we're building a bigger stick to direct them. Rather than providing good oversight, we're bringing in accountability measures where you take over the existing mechanism, which is that the governance is done by the board of directors, the administration of the place is done by the executive director or the chief executive officer, no matter the title, and then the work is carried out by the workers. So rather than make sure that you supervise and you oversee that process that exists throughout Ontario, that has served Ontario well for decades and decades and decades, we are now taking it for granted that the wish of the ministry will be better, that the will of the ministry will be better. It is a dangerous slope, but, in and of itself, the government feels that it needs a bigger stick to deal with Ornge, although Ornge wouldn't say "Boo" right now without asking for ministry permission.

They also are giving themselves the right to assign a special investigator or to assign a supervisor. This is something that we have seen in other parts of the health care system. It has sometimes been useful, especially in—it has been used mainly with hospitals. In the hospital act, you find powers that are pretty much equivalent to this.

On the wish of the minister to give herself or himself—as times will change; it's "hers" right now—those powers, what happened at Ornge was quite horrific, and having the power to have an investigator or supervisor has been shown to bring positive results in other parts of the health care system. This is also in the bill so that if the ministry is not happy, they can dismiss the board, put

in a supervisor who basically takes over, put in a special investigator who basically takes over. When a supervisor comes in, depending on their mandate, they can take over the job of the board so the governance is no longer made by the community for the community; it is made by the supervisor. The job of the CEO is no longer his job; it is taken over. When a supervisor goes in, the ministry decides how broad the power of that supervisor will be.

Do I really think that we will ever need a supervisor at Ornge? Not likely. They've gone through some pretty tough times. As you go through, you have this feeling that you've shut the barn door once the horse has already ran out. The damage at Ornge is done. We should look at a bill that rebuilds trust, that rebuilds confidence, but that's not what we have at all. We have a bill that gives a ton of power to the ministry if something ever goes astray with this agency again.

The bill goes through quite a bit of detail as to how a supervisor would be appointed, what happens if there's no quorum of the board, the delays for appointing, the terms of office, the powers of the supervisors. All of this you can find in that bill, including the right of access to the premises etc.

But I will point, and I will continue to point, that all of those measures are made—whether it's an investigator or whether it's a supervisor, those people will report back either to the ministry or to the minister. That means that you and I, Mr. Speaker, don't get to see what's happening. We may or may not get whatever information they feel can be shared with us, but there is nothing in this bill that says that if something goes wrong, if people ring the alarm bell like they did the last time at Ornge—for months and years people rang the alarm bell and said, "Things are wrong. You guys have to go and look in there. Look at what they are doing." But yet, nobody will hear back. It doesn't matter if they do this again. If things go bad and people ring the alarm bell, whatever report comes back, we will be excluded from this entire equation. It will be ministry-driven, if she decides to so act, and this report will go back simply to her and to her ministry. We are excluded from this.

Then there is the whistle-blowing protection. I told you that at the beginning when it was first introduced—it was introduced the day the scathing report from the Auditor General came out. The whistle-blower protection was—you know when you do a cut-and-paste on your computer? They did one of those. They took the whistle-blower protection that exists in the Long-Term Care Homes Act and copied it into the Ambulance Act.

In the Long-Term Care Homes Act, the whistle-blower protection makes sense, because you go into any of the 750 long-term-care facilities that exist in Ontario and everybody who works there knows who the inspectors are. They know how to get a hold of them, because there's a 1-800 number posted everywhere in the home. It's the law. They have to be. So everybody knows who the inspector is and everybody knows how to get a hold of the inspector.

So it makes a lot of sense to say to a whistle-blower in a long-term care home, "You will disclose to an inspect-

or, an investigator or a special investigator,” because they know who the inspectors are, and the system works. But when you copy something that comes from the Long-Term Care Homes Act and put it in the Ambulance Act, it doesn't work so well.

You can go and ask any of the people on the base in Moosonee or Sudbury or anywhere in the north, because this is where air ambulance is most needed, in northern Ontario. Because of the distance, because of the lack of medical facilities where we are, we are the biggest beneficiary of air ambulance. Don't get me wrong; they do lots of work in southern Ontario with accidents and roadside assistance. But where I live, for a lot of communities that I serve, we have no ambulance service except Ornge.

So ask any of the people who work and say, “Okay, you have whistle-blowing protection. All you have to do is disclose to an inspector, an investigator or a special investigator,” and they look at you as if you're from Mars. “Who the heck is this? How do I get a hold of those people? The inspector? Is that the guy who comes for the special brakes on the airplanes, or is this the guy who comes to see—who is the inspector?” In long-term care it's clear. It's posted on the board; it has a 1-800 number. In air ambulance services, it needs a bit of work.

The cut-and-paste could kind of be forgiven in March 2012. In March 2013, when we had four months of prorogation to basically give us time, when we had already given them feedback about their bills, they come back with things like this? Who are we kidding here?

Anybody who has followed Ornge can tell you that there are some people, whistle-blowers, who have gone through a lot of personal hardship because they blew the whistle. Those people lost their jobs. Some of them are still without a job because they tried to tell us what was wrong at Ornge. Not only did nobody believe them, not only did nobody listen to them and nobody acted; they were punished for it. They lost their livelihood.

0920

In this, you can show those men and women who have lost their jobs because they worked at Ornge and blew the whistle because they knew what was going on was wrong and they wanted to do good because they cared about the services they provide. Will this help you in any way, shape or form? No.

They would have still lost their jobs. They would have still been stuck trying to hire a lawyer to represent them when they don't have an income, and this is what this bill is all about. Sure, they're not allowed to do this. And if by magic you find the right inspector to call at the Ministry of Health after you've—I don't know—spent a couple of months trying the thousands of numbers that lead you to the Ministry of Health and find the right person to talk to—sure, now you're supposed to be protected. But the protection is pretty weak.

They're not supposed to lay you off, but if they do lay you off, well, all you have to do is find the money somewhere to hire a lawyer to represent you so that you can fight to have your job back. Who, first of all, would have the means to defend themselves in court for cases that go

for months on end when they don't have an income anymore? Ask the secretary at Ornge—sorry, the executive assistant at Ornge who lost her job because she blew the whistle if she would have been able to do that.

This bill needs some work, Mr. Speaker. It's easy to say, “We've added whistle-blower protection.” Yes, the words are there, “whistle-blower protection,” it's in there in the bill, but the copy-and-paste method from long-term care to Ornge doesn't work. We've had many months to do the changes, but nothing was done. So in theory the whistle-blower cannot be dismissed, cannot be disciplined, cannot have a penalty, cannot be intimidated, coerced or harassed because they've blown the whistle to people they don't know. And if they ever, God forbid, dial the right number and find somebody who will listen, even if they do get dismissed, they're on their own to fight for their job back, because there's nothing in the whistle-blowing protection that will support them or help them. So you can say that we have whistle-blower protection; it is a pretty thin protection.

All right, then we continue. There was this great big thing made of—because remember, as this was going through, the Minister of Health changed her story a number of times. So the story of the week one week was that they could not do their oversight of Ornge because Ornge was incorporated at the federal level. Well, we have yet to find anyone who can tell us how a federal incorporation changes anything. The bill says that Ornge, which is incorporated federally, will now have to change their incorporation to be incorporated at the provincial level. Okay, I'll give the benefit of the doubt. But if it's true that a transfer payment agency of the Ministry of Health is incorporated at the federal level, it means that government cannot do oversight, then why is it that we let Pembroke Regional Hospital incorporate? They are incorporated at the federal level. Are we asking them to change their incorporation? Because apparently if you're incorporated at the federal level, the government cannot do oversight.

Are we asking Hotel Dieu in St. Catharines to change their incorporation from the federal level to the provincial level? Because the minister would have us believe that if you're incorporated at the federal level, then she cannot do her job of oversight. How about Collingwood General hospital? Are we going to ask them to change their incorporation? Should I continue with that list? I take it that you got the idea of where I'm going with this?

There are many agencies that report directly to the Ministry of Health that are incorporated at the federal level, and it has never been an issue. The government has been able to do their oversight. Those are stellar organizations. There is nothing wrong with them. They do their oversight. They do what the ministry asks them to do. They follow their accountability agreements, and they're incorporated at the federal level. This is one of the many problems with the bill, you see?

It says that it finds the problem, and it pretends that it has the solutions, but then it fails to tie the two. If federal incorporation was as big an issue as they made it to be—

because for a week there, it was the top of the news. “The reason why the government could not do oversight of Ornge was because it was incorporated, but have no fear. We have found a solution. We’re passing this new bill that will mandate Ornge to be incorporated at the provincial level so that we can”—if any of that was accurate, wouldn’t they want all of the other transfer payment agencies—some of them I’ve named, but I could continue with that game if you want, because there are many, many, that are incorporated at the federal level. Wouldn’t they want all of them to switch to the provincial level? None of them have been approached.

Actually, there are some new transfer payment agencies being formed right now, and they know that they have to incorporate, and the ministry doesn’t even issue a blink of an eye if they decide to incorporate at the federal level or provincial level. It is left up to the community to decide.

So how can you, in one part, tell us that we have to pass the Ambulance Amendment Act for air ambulance, that we have to put in this act that “the federal level of incorporation was a major problem and we are so proud to be correcting it and taking decisive action”—there’s nothing that they can’t say. But yet, it’s not being applied anywhere else outside of Ornge.

Interjection: It’s window dressing.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It looks very much like window dressing. It looks very much like this whole charade of this bill did not come about because of sound policy; it came about because Ornge hit the front page of the paper.

When Ornge was on the front page of the paper, any issues that were picked up in the media, you can find in here. Whether they are based on a shred of evidence or not makes no difference, Mr. Speaker. If the media talked about it, the minister responded in her bill. But if the good people of Ontario tried, nobody listened to them. If the whistle-blowers put their jobs on the line to try to get through that things were wrong, nobody listened to them. They listened to the media, and this is a bill that, if the media has made a headline out of it, it is in this bill. What for? Beats me.

What will changing the incorporation from the federal to the provincial level change? I have no idea. We’ve asked this question many times, from many witnesses. I’ve actually asked it from a number of lawyers, because there were lots of lawyers in this investigation. Of the 67 people that came, a high percentage of them were lawyers, and you can ask all of them if the incorporation was any different.

Let me see if I can find this. I have Mrs. Golding, who is one of the lawyers who worked for Ornge. One of the questions I asked at the time—I’m quoting myself; I feel self-important this morning, Mr. Speaker. “In layman’s terms, whether you incorporate at the federal level or at the provincial level, like many hospitals do, it changes in nothing the responsibility or the oversight of the government of Ontario, more specifically the Ministry of Health.” I am asking this of Mrs. Lynne Golding.

Mrs. Golding’s answer: “That is correct. There are at least half a dozen hospitals incorporated federally. I think

they would all take the view that they are subject to the laws of Ontario and the dictates of the Ministry of Health.”

I could keep on quoting, but I think I’ve beat that one to death, so I will move on, as I only have nine minutes left, and there are some other major failings in this bill.

0930

Yes, it made the headlines. They included it in the bill. I think it will do nothing. The proof that it will do nothing is that we find it elsewhere in the health care system, and the ministry is quite happy to let it continue the way it is.

Then comes what I call the ugly part of the bill because we now see the government—the Ministry of Health—giving itself powers that I have never seen anywhere else. That, to me, is not a good precedent to set. If anybody is following in the bill, we’re in subsection 22(1). It talks about the ministry giving itself power to change the bylaws and to change the articles of the letters patent.

I will speak French for a little while parce que pour tous les organismes de santé qui offrent des services en français, pour tous ceux qui ont vécu la bataille de SOS Montfort, pour tous les organismes francophones, et les centres de santé communautaires, en particulier, dont j’étais une directrice, ce qui nous permet de continuer d’offrir des services en français quand le ministère de la Santé arrive avec ses gros sabots pour nous dire : « Ah, bien, je sais que vous êtes une agence francophone, mais on aimerait que vous commenciez à offrir ci et ci et ça, qui n’est pas du tout dans votre mandat »—la façon dont SOS Montfort a gagné sa bataille, la façon dont le centre de santé communautaire de Sudbury a pu continuer d’offrir des services en français, c’est à cause des lettres patentes et c’est à cause de nos règlements.

Là, on vient d’ouvrir un précédent qui me rend très, très nerveuse, parce que si le ministère de la Santé peut, avec le projet de loi—j’admets que le projet de loi ne s’applique qu’aux ambulances aériennes en ce moment. Mais une fois que tu as créé le précédent et une fois qu’une agence de transfert de paiement du ministère de la Santé a une loi qui s’y applique et cette loi-là dit que le ministère—la ministre, en fait—peut changer tes lettres patentes et tes statuts et règlements, peu importe ce que son conseil d’administration—peu importe ta gouvernance, peu importe ce qui t’a amené là—et ce n’est pas seulement pour les services en français. Pensez les services désignés pour les femmes. Pensez les services désignés pour les personnes LGBTIQ. Il y a plein d’agences du ministère de la Santé et de bien d’autres ministères qui ont des mandats bien précis. Ces mandats-là bien précis leurs sont donnés par leurs lettres patentes et leurs sont confirmés par leurs statuts et règlements.

Là, j’ai un projet de loi devant moi qui me dit que le ministère de la Santé va se donner le pouvoir unilatéral d’ignorer complètement ce que la communauté a travaillé à bâtir et de changer tes lettres patentes et tes statuts et règlements. Pour les centaines de milliers de Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes qui se sont battus pour

SOS Montfort, une clause comme ça dans un projet de loi veut dire qu'on aurait perdu Montfort. Pour les centaines de milliers de Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes qui se sont battus à Penetang, à Sudbury et un peu partout où on a eu d'autres SOS, tout ce que le ministère aurait eu besoin de faire, c'est de changer nos lettres patentes et nos statuts et règlements, et les arguments de la cour ne tiendraient plus la route.

Quand je vois un projet de loi qui donne à la ministre de la Santé des pouvoirs comme ça, je peux voir qu'en ce moment les gens sont très nerveux par rapport à Ornge. Les gens veulent de la protection pour ne plus que ça se passe à Ornge, mais franchement, ce ne sera pas à Ornge que ça va se passer, un scandale comme on vient de voir; ça va être dans une autre agence de transfert de paiement. Mais une fois que tu as ouvert la porte—vous vous souvenez, je vous ai dit qu'ils ont fait du copier-coller. Ils ont pris la protection pour les « whistle-blowers » dans un projet de loi et l'ont copiée dans un autre. Qu'est-ce qui empêcherait, une fois que tu as un projet de loi comme ça, de la mettre dans la loi qui régit hôpitaux, dans la loi qui régit les RLIS, dans la loi qui régit les maisons de soins de longue durée ou dans n'importe quel autre projet de loi du ministère de la Santé? On vient d'ouvrir un précédent qui, à mon avis, n'apportera rien de bien pour Ornge. Ornge n'a pas besoin de ça. Ornge suit à la lettre les directives du ministère. Ornge a un « spotlight » sur eux autres qui n'en finit pas; ils n'ont pas besoin de clauses comme ça. Mais passer dans un projet de loi des clauses comme on est en train de regarder en ce moment ouvre une porte qui est beaucoup trop dangereuse et que je ne suis pas prête à ouvrir du tout.

Comme je vous ai dit, en mars 2012, oui, j'avais beaucoup plus de patience et de tolérance. Ils avaient agi à la hâte pour répondre, vraiment, aux médias, mais en même temps pour répondre au vérificateur général. La patience, un an plus tard, est moins disponible. Ça fait un an que ce projet de loi est là. Ça fait un an qu'on dit qu'il y a des grosses failles dans le projet de loi, et aujourd'hui, ce matin, j'ai essayé de vous montrer certaines de ces failles.

So for a year now, we've had the exact same bill in front of us—the exact same bill that, when I got up the first time and when the PCs got up the first time, showed to the minister had serious holes through it. I even made a little joke that you could drive a helicopter through some of the holes in that bill. Well, it looks like the joke is still there, because you can drive a helicopter through some of the holes in that bill.

That bill has not taken into account the series of failings that allowed for the fiasco at Ornge. If there are weaknesses in an agreement that does not allow the ministry to do their work of oversight, why don't we talk about that in the bill? If it is true that the ministry needs changes from federal incorporations to provincial incorporations, then why don't you extend it to the entire health care system? Why just at Ornge? It's either a danger for every transfer payment agency, or it is not one.

But the biggest failing of all, Mr. Speaker, is that everything that is in this bill gives the government more of a say; it does not give the people of Ontario more of a say. When things go wrong—and I can rhyme you a list of coroner's inquests from people in my riding, from the man who died in Capreol to what happened to those two teens in Gogama, but I know that it's painful to some of the people in my riding, so I won't name them—you know who they call? They call the Ombudsman because they know that he will be on their side and they know that he will help them. But even if they call the Ombudsman, the Ombudsman says, "I'm sorry. I can't help you. I don't have jurisdiction over Ornge."

Give the people a sense that they will be listened to. Give them Ombudsman oversight. Give us, in the Legislature, the right to bring Ornge to committee so that we can hold them to account. It doesn't cost anything. It's a small step, but they won't give us that at all. The bill is one-sided to the ministry, to the damn of the rest of us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oak Ridges—Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you will not be surprised that I disagree with a great deal of what the member from Nickel Belt has said. Since I only have two minutes, I'm going to concentrate on something that she talked about on Tuesday, when she implied that the previous air ambulance system here in Ontario was somehow incredibly superior. This is absolutely not the case.

In fact, the Auditor General's report of 2005 delineated what were the problems when we had a contracted-out system here in Ontario. He said that Ontario's air ambulance system was fractured, with disjointed services and multiple structures in the system that made it difficult to align resources. A shortage of critical care paramedics meant that air ambulance flights were frequently down-staffed, especially in northern Ontario. There was no centralized way to track the air ambulance system's performance, nor were there performance measures used in operating the system. The system was confusing and difficult for patients to navigate. The system lacked transparency and accountability. And there was poor structure for patient privacy protection. Several coroners' investigations prior to 2005 found that the air ambulance system, as structured, contributed to the deaths of Ontarians.

0940

Now, as we all know, the decision to create Ornge was very much guided by that Auditor General's report in 2005. What we saw subsequent to that was a rogue agency where the board of directors ignored their fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers of Ontario, and where there was a CEO who was driven by greed to take personal advantage of the situation of that lack of oversight by the board of directors.

So, moving forward, we are determined to ensure this never happens again. Bill 11, in fact, is a huge step forward. I know my colleague from Ottawa—Orléans in his next remarks will outline yet again all the very positive

steps in this bill. This is a good step forward for air ambulance in Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, a good summary from the member from Nickel Belt. The member, as with myself and others from all three parties, sits on public accounts, dealing with the Ornge air ambulance issue.

Yesterday, at 9 a.m., the committee reconvened after a four-month prorogation. Yesterday, at 9 a.m., an Ornge helicopter arrived just outside my town of Port Dover. There was a horrendous crash: a cement truck rolled over on a car. I know this because my daughter witnessed this; she was the only witness. She phoned 911. It just happened that a land ambulance came along right after her car, on a delivery, and put my daughter in the back to look after this young patient. He was okay. They ran down into the ditch and immediately phoned an air ambulance. Two fellows came along; they work for the county. They ran down into the ditch to try and help out. Volunteer firefighters were there within minutes. The Simcoe Reformer, our local paper, was there within minutes.

My point: Air ambulance is very important for all of us, particularly in the rural south, in addition to the north.

When I think of yesterday's accident—the volunteers, the good Samaritans, the professionals who ran down there: They don't make millions of dollars off the taxpayer. They don't get speedboats courtesy of the taxpayer. They do not get Harley-Davidson choppers courtesy of the taxpayer. What has gone on with Ornge is an insult to the volunteers, the professionals, the pilots and the paramedics who do an excellent job.

The operative words here are "oversight," "transparency," "control" and "accountability"—all have been lacking.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to follow my colleague from Nickel Belt, who truly has a vast understanding of this issue. It has been in her past life of health care, and she brought up some very good points.

I'd like to bring the memory of the Legislature back to when a person came to testify at the committee, a person from my riding: Trevor Kidd. He sat in this members' gallery after that, and members from all three parties applauded him because he came to testify. But Trevor blew the whistle for three years. The whistle-blowing wasn't the problem; the problem was that no one was listening.

To me, there's nothing in this bill that really proves that the government is really listening. Oh, sure, they want to slam the door shut on the Ornge fiasco. That's plain. Slam the door shut. But are they really creating legislation that's actually going to shed light on where there might be other Ornges or other problems? Because let's face it, the health ministry and all ministries are big things, and bad things are going to happen regardless of who's running the show. How you learn from things and how you make things better is to actually look at what

went wrong and say, "Okay, could this be happening anywhere else?" Because there are other Trevor Kidds out there, you know. With this bill, even in Ornge, those people like Trevor still can't go to the Ombudsman; it doesn't cover it. They can't really go to the Legislature, because they don't cover it. If someone like Trevor can't find the inspector or doesn't know who the inspector is, going to the Minister of Health doesn't necessarily help, because it didn't work last time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Let me say from the outset that I have great respect and admiration for the member from Nickel Belt. She has a long and distinguished career in the health profession in both Sudbury and the Nickel Belt area, and I think she made a very positive contribution to the discussion this morning.

Bill 11 being in second reading, at some future point in time, of course, this bill will make its way to committee for review, an opportunity to go through it on a line-by-line basis, and certainly, with a minority government, an opportunity for both the official opposition and the third party to look at some concrete amendments, which inevitably will happen when this bill gets to committee.

I was also struck, of course, listening to the translation of the member from Nickel Belt, in terms of potential impact on the francophone community, which is always crucial. We were here yesterday with the francophone association of Ontario at Queen's Park, something that we all take as very important. Many, many years ago, of course, we had the passing of the French Languages Services Act in the province of Ontario, which was brought about by the government of Premier David Peterson.

But when you look at what has happened over the last little while with Ornge, there is a new chapter at Ornge: the hiring of Dr. Andrew McCallum as president and chief executive officer, who has an outstanding record as a public servant; the appointment of a quality care committee under Dr. Barry McLellan; the appointment of a new board of director chair, Ian Delaney, who had an extensive career with Sherritt International.

Ornge has now submitted its first quality improvement plan. We're also suggesting that Ornge retroactively be subject to freedom-of-information requests, in keeping with our commitment to transparency across the broader public service.

I look forward to this bill going to committee and amendments that will inevitably happen there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Nickel Belt: two minutes for response.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank the members from Oak Ridges–Markham, Haldimand–Norfolk, my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane and the Minister of Rural Affairs for their comments.

I think we're kind of all singing the same song, that we want transparency, we want oversight, we want better control, and we want accountability—but not just for Ornge. We want it for every program and service of the Ministry of Health. We want to make sure that, when a

whistle-blower puts their job on the line, they are protected.

But we can't ignore the facts. When we have a lawyer come in front of public accounts and tell us, "The government was thoroughly, painstakingly and, in all cases, truthfully briefed in advance of Ornge taking any of these actions," when we have a lawyer under oath telling us that the ministry knew everything, when we have good people like Trevor Kidd telling us that for three years he blew the whistle and nobody listened—if everybody points at the ministry as the one not having done their job, then a bill says, "Yes, we need a bigger stick; we need more ways to control Ornge"—but we're looking at a ministry that refused to use the controls that they had.

Have no fear, Mr. Speaker: If the government doesn't sign off on your budget, the end of the year is coming on March 31, and it's now March—something and the ministry hasn't signed off, believe you me, you will do anything that the ministry asks you to do, whether you have to, because your board of directors is going to look and say, "You need to make this work." The government never said boo, and that's why we had Ornge.

0950

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to speak in support of our government's proposed amendments to the Ambulance Act.

These amendments are key to ensuring that Ontario's air and critical care land ambulance service is focused on its core mission of providing life-saving care for Ontarians. I hope to see every member in the House support the proposed amendments, which would entrench accountability and transparency in Ontario's air ambulance service; ensure that Ontario patients and families are getting the highest-possible quality of patient care; ensure that Ontario taxpayers receive the best value for their taxpayer dollars—Ontario taxpayers have every right to know how health care dollars are spent; and continue to restore public confidence in an organization that provides life-saving emergency medicine.

Our government has committed to implementing the Auditor General's recommendations, and these amendments will allow us to do so.

Ontario's air ambulance program was established in 1977 by the Ministry of Health with a single aircraft based in Toronto. The service had three main elements: funding, dispatch and the oversight provided by the ministry, with a base hospital system at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. They oversaw the practice of paramedicine and air ambulance services that were contracted out.

In June 2005, the government consolidated the air ambulance program to the Ontario Air Ambulances Services Co., known as OAA. In November 2005, our government finalized the long-term performance agreement with the OAA, which governed all aspects of air ambulance services. This agreement outlined responsibilities and expectations in the services to be delivered by Ornge.

In September 2006, the newly renamed Ornge corporation took over the management of the air ambulance dispatch. In 2007, Ornge signed an agreement for expanded critical care fixed-wing air ambulance services and in 2008, Ornge took over responsibility to provide critical care land ambulance services. That same year, Ornge grew its fleet with the purchase of high-performance medically equipped helicopters and high-performance medically equipped aircraft.

In 2009, Ornge Air purchased four hangar locations, located in Ottawa, Moosonee, Kenora and London. In 2010, Ornge transported its 100,000th patient.

Over the past year, Ornge has made significant progress. We have seen a change in leadership and a shift toward transparency and accountability. Dr. Andrew McCallum is now the president and CEO. Dr. McCallum was trained as a military flight surgeon and is a former chief coroner of Ontario. He's held senior posts at hospitals in Toronto and Hamilton, and is well equipped to assist with improving oversight and accountability at Ornge. Former Skyservice president Rob Giguere is now the chief operating officer. There's a newly appointed board of directors led by Ian W. Delaney, chairman of Sherritt International. Board members at Ornge now serve as volunteers.

Ornge has also appointed a quality of care committee under the direction of Dr. Barry McLellan, president and CEO of Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, and executive expenses and salary ranges are now posted online.

Members of this House, and more importantly residents of our province, all have the highest expectations of our health care leaders—expectations which must be met. We must work to ensure not only excellent patient care, but as well, a responsible management of public money. We must have leaders in health care that will stay true and ensure that their service—not only to patients but to taxpayers—is the core of their operations.

Speaker, I'm confident that this new leadership team, led by Dr. McCallum, will fulfill their commitment to Ornge's core mission, and to the patients and taxpayers of Ontario, day in and day out.

As part of its patient-centred focus, Ornge has introduced a new patient relations process, making it easier for a patient or family member to express complaints or concerns or to ask a question or give feedback. The new process also includes a more accessible patient relations section on the Ornge website.

Ornge now has a patient advocate, Denise Polgar, who acts as a liaison with patients and families, works to resolve their concerns about patient care and who can also suggest operational improvements based on what is learned from the patient relations process. Speaker, already this new team has taken significant steps with Ornge to improve transparency and accountability.

A new performance agreement will provide greater accountability and oversight over Ornge. The amended performance agreement raises the level of oversight far above that which is normally required of organizations receiving public funds.

Under the former agreement, the past leadership was able to avoid accountability. In the past, our government did not have the power to regularly access financial information and monitor operations at Ornge. In the past, the performance agreement did not require ministry approval to create for-profit entities. In the past, Ornge had no restrictions on assuming debt, and the old performance agreement gave our government no say in major acquisitions.

Under the amended performance agreement, ministry approval is required for any changes to Ornge's corporate structure, including sale of assets. It requires detailed financial planning, monitoring, control and reporting obligations to increase accountability. It ensures compliance with the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act and the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. It increases audit and inspection powers by the ministry and introduces debt control provisions to prevent debt increases without ministry approval. Finally, it introduces quality improvement provisions based on the Excellent Care for All Act. This includes linking executive compensation to performance, improving targets and an annual quality improvement plan.

In fact, Ornge has already submitted a first quality improvement plan outlining successes I would like to acknowledge here today. From October to December 2012, Ornge confirmed its ability to respond to a call for on-scene service within 10 minutes of the start of a call 90% of the time. And 96% of the time, Ornge was able to meet their target of verifying their ability to service a call for an inter-facility transfer within 20 minutes. Success in recruiting new helicopter and airplane pilots means that from October to December 2012, Ornge was able to staff their aircraft at the Ontario air ambulance standard of two pilots at all times, 97% of the time. During the same time period, there was a 97.3% base aircraft availability. Finally, in September 2012, Ornge scored 90% on the quality-of-care metric, an indicator that reviews care against industry standards in eight key clinical care areas.

The amended performance agreement raises the level of oversight with the following measures and obligations:

- tougher funding conditions based on key performance indicators;

- increased audit and inspection powers by the ministry;

- more detailed financial planning, monitoring, control and reporting obligations;

- a committee to advise the board on quality improvement initiatives;

- a new patient advocate and complaints process to ensure patient safety, like the one used in Ontario hospitals;

- mandatory public reporting of expenses and restrictions on meals, travel and hospitality;

- quality improvement provisions that link executive compensation to performance improvement targets in an annual quality plan; and

- mandatory approval by the minister for any changes to Ornge's corporate structure, or the sale of assets by Ornge.

The amended performance agreement places a much greater emphasis on performance standards, and it requires increased reporting of dispatch information, including cancelled and declined air and land ambulance calls. The performance agreement is closely aligned with the Excellent Care for All Act, which guides the province's hospitals.

The new agreement also ensures compliance with the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act and Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. It increases audit and inspection—those powers by the ministry—and introduces debt control provisions to prevent debt increases that do not have ministry approval.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the performance agreement also provides for tougher funding conditions based on key performance indicators and a committee to advise the board on quality improvement initiatives. We are pleased that an amended performance agreement is in place. It represents a critical step towards an improved air ambulance system. Yet for all the strengthened provisions it now contains, we need to go even further.

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I'm familiar with the Auditor General's report on Ornge, having sat on the public accounts committee. His advice has guided many of the actions that are now being taken to improve operations and restore confidence in Ornge. I'm pleased that the Auditor General acknowledged that we have taken substantive action to address many of the issues raised in his report. We are certainly striving to move even further.

I want to highlight the improvements that have been made to address these concerns. After extensive consultation with front-line staff, new, improved interim medical interiors have been installed in the fleet of AW139 helicopters. Transport Canada approval for the interim interior for the AW139 aircraft has also been acquired. Steps have been taken to introduce a third line of paramedics at the Thunder Bay base to help ensure seamless 24-hour seven-day-a-week service for northern Ontario. Dedicated flight service for the Sault-Ste.-Marie-to-Sudbury corridor has been created, increasing patient access to out-of-town treatment. A pilot project in Ottawa on the use of critical-care land vehicles in place of a helicopter has been launched for certain calls when deemed appropriate for patient care. Three operations divisions have been consolidated under one chief operating officer. All operational scheduling functions have now been combined into one team for improved coverage and service effectiveness. Certification material for the operations control centre has been developed and implemented.

Speaker, it is important to note here the contribution of paramedics, pilots and front-line staff. These improvements were a direct result of their dedication and input.

I have outlined for this House the history of Ornge and the changes in leadership and improvements to accountability and operations that have been made in recent months. I would now like to speak to the proposed amendments introduced by Minister Matthews that will help Ornge focus on their core mission, which is pro-

viding life-saving care to patients, now and in the future. Minister Matthews' proposed legislative amendments to the Ambulance Act ensure greater oversight of Ontario's air ambulance service, ensure the best value for taxpayers' dollars, and above all provide the highest possible quality of patient care. These amendments will also prevent future abuses of power at Ontario's air ambulance service.

If passed, these amendments would:

- give cabinet the power, upon the recommendation of the minister, to appoint one or more provincial representatives to the board of an air ambulance service provider;

- give the minister the power to issue directives to an air ambulance service provider;

- give the government the ability to include provisions in an agreement between Ontario and an air ambulance service provider;

- provide cabinet with the power to appoint a special investigator to investigate and report on certain activities of an air ambulance service provider;

- prohibit individuals from obstructing a special investigator or from withholding any information required by the special investigator;

- require a special investigator to provide a report to the minister upon completion of their investigation;

- provide cabinet with the power, upon recommendation of the minister, to appoint a supervisor to exercise the powers of the board, officers and members, and other corporate powers of an air ambulance service provider; and

- provide a supervisor with the same rights as the board of an air ambulance service provider; the supervisor would report to the minister.

This is one that has been spoken about a great deal; it's a whistle-blower protection. There's a large section in this act that relates to this: prohibit retaliation against a person who has disclosed information that relates to an air ambulance service provider to an inspector, investigator or special investigator. Air ambulance service providers and other persons would also be prohibited from doing anything to discourage the making of such disclosure.

And it would allow the continuance of a provider of air ambulance services that is incorporated under the laws of any jurisdiction other than Ontario as a corporation under the Corporations Act.

We know that it is extremely important that employees do not feel intimidated when raising any concerns, and our proposed amendments to legislation would protect whistle-blowers at Ornge.

In addition to this legislation, our government is proposing to make Ornge subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act through regulation. This would allow for freedom-of-information requests to be made of Ornge retroactive to the organization's foundation. This step is consistent with our government's commitment to increasing transparency across the broad public sector, including the health care sector.

For example, we expanded freedom-of-information provisions to cover Ontario Power Generation, to cover Hydro One, to cover universities and to cover Cancer Care Ontario; local public utilities were brought back under freedom of information in 2004—all during the term of this government. We made hospitals subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, effective January 1, 2012.

I'd like to conclude today by thanking the paramedics, pilots and front-line staff at Ornge. They work tirelessly each and every day to provide lifesaving care to Ontarians across the province, and they must be acknowledged and thanked. This has been a difficult time for front-line staff at Ornge and yet they continue their work and never lose sight of their responsibilities to the patients. The amendments that our government is proposing will truly restore the public's confidence in our air ambulance services. These proposed amendments will ensure the highest quality of care and the best use of taxpayers' dollars.

I'm confident in the advice of the Auditor General and the advice of the front-line workers at Ornge who have helped to inform the proposed amendments before you today. I urge every member of this House to support these amendments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I appreciate the opportunity to make a few remarks concerning the comments made by several of the Liberal members, most recently by the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Before I go into that, I too would like to thank the front-line workers who provide the air ambulance service in the province of Ontario, from the pilots to the paramedics to all of the people who work in the service who have done so over these last few months—in fact, over a year now—under very, very trying circumstances. They are to be commended for their professionalism and dedication.

But the situation that they've been labouring under has been more than troubling for this past year or so, given the fact that there have been some egregious activities that have taken place under the nose of the Minister of Health without any action having been taken. Quite frankly, Bill 11 falls far short of taking the steps that are necessary to restore the public's confidence in our air ambulance service here in Ontario. We have seen situations where there have been monies wasted in the millions of dollars with nothing to show for it, where people who have tried to come forward as whistle-blowers have been not only not listened to; they've actually been suspended. There was a pilot from Thunder Bay who came forward in the public accounts committee last summer to talk about some of the problems that he had been experiencing along with his colleagues, and for his efforts he was suspended for a period of time.

This isn't what we want to see, and I should stress that this is under the new regime. This wasn't under the old regime. This was under the new regime with people who were handpicked by the Minister of Health, who were

tasked with reforming this situation. We need far more accountability in this organization. We need far more oversight. What's been proposed as an internal investigator falls far short of what we need. We need the Ombudsman to be able to get in there to provide that independent oversight to make sure that this situation never happens again.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to stand here and speak to this bill. I think that members across the gallery have expressed their concern that when it comes to accountability and transparency, we need that throughout agencies in Ontario and not just here.

We know that Ornge in the future will have oversight. Everyone will be watching this agency. It's my concern that we have a close eye on agencies across the province and that we have a framework moving forward that actually restores confidence in our public institutions.

I'm concerned that this government, as well as the PC government, have a love affair with privatization, with handing things off away from a place where they can be under public scrutiny. Without addressing this ideological difference about how we best govern, we're at risk of doing these things over and over again, Speaker.

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I want us to actually ensure—whether it's Metrolinx or it's a decision around casinos in this province or it's agencies like Ornge—that we commit to a public delivery system that has actual oversight, that has actual accountability, that will restore the confidence of the people of this province in our ability to govern and in our ability to deliver for all of them. Until I see that, I think that this is just a small piece of the puzzle and that it still leaves us wide open to the kind of things that we've seen in Ornge.

Speaker, thank you very much. I'll pass for now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I had the opportunity to listen to the, I thought, very insightful remarks this morning by my colleague the member from Ottawa—Orléans. He went to a great degree to talk about some of the new things that we're contemplating for Ornge: the new performance agreement, which strengthens government oversight and improves patient care; significant improvement of accountability and transparency by posting executive expenses and salary ranges online, something I think we can all support; and introducing new policies and procedures on conflict of interest and whistle-blower protection, performance management and executive compensation.

Bill 11 contemplates the appointment of an independent ethics officer to receive, investigate and track employee disclosures as part of a new whistle-blower protection policy, something I think all of us on all sides of the House can support.

In terms of patient care, which is the bottom line—patient care should always be the bottom line—we've

hired or will be hiring a new patient advocate to work with patients and their families to address concerns and advocate for operational improvements.

We've installed new and improved interim medical interiors in the fleet of AW139 helicopters, which I'm sure are great. After extensive consultation with front-line staff—very important—we've obtained Transport Canada approval for the interior for the AW139 aircraft. I should take a moment in the not-too-distant future to do an inspection of one of the AW139 helicopters.

We took steps to introduce a third line of paramedics at the Thunder Bay base to help ensure 24/7 service for northern Ontario—very important. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines was a very strong advocate of that initiative.

We have created a dedicated flight service for the Sault-Ste-Marie-to-Sudbury corridor, increasing patient access for out-of-town treatment. We have—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm sorry. I could go on and on and on, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened to the member from Ottawa—Orléans, and I just want to leave something on the record here. Let's look at what has happened. What I've always learned, Mr. Speaker, is that past performance is the best predictor of future performance.

I've heard this morning, listening very carefully, the member from Nickel Belt. The Nickel Belt member is highly regarded in this place. She said what I think, which is, this just doesn't get it done.

A good example would be the member from Peterborough just talking about the patient advocate. In fact, really, what would be the most independent, qualified oversight would be the Ombudsman oversight. If you really want accountability and the patient first, we don't want any political manipulations going on here, which is what I suspect is happening here. It's again a matter of trust.

When I come down to it—the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, Mr. Barrett, this morning spoke about his daughter witnessing an accident, and all of the volunteers who showed up.

This industry, the Ornge industry, ever since it was taken over by McGuinty, now Wynne, is the largest bureaucracy, the most expensive bureaucracy. Chris Mazza was in the paper last week about taking payments over and above the one-point-something million dollars he made, and yet he didn't even know how to spell “helicopter,” let alone how they operate.

I honestly put to you that this bill—it replaces Bill 50—Bill 11, I think, simply doesn't get it done. Mr. Speaker, this is important: It comes down to trust. At the end of the day, I can't trust that this bill is fixing a problem. It's just simply putting a coat of paint over a very rotten, substantive organization governance model that this government—they can't step it aside. They put it in place. It simply doesn't do it for me.

I look forward to our critic, Christine Elliott, from Whitby—Oshawa—she'll tell you what the truth is. You should listen up because I think she's the next speaker on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa—Orléans, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'd like to thank the members for Whitby—Oshawa and Davenport, the Minister of Rural Affairs and the member from Durham for their comments.

One of the issues that I would like to speak about is that privatization, in many cases, has worked well. In this case, it went horribly wrong—the wrong people, who were very lacking in the standards that we have.

But we now have Dr. Andrew McCallum as the president of the board. He's a trained military flight surgeon and a former chief coroner of Ontario. I think that's the new standard in Ornge, and it's certainly needed.

Sitting through those many hours of having people come into the public accounts committee to answer questions—certainly, much was needed in changing Ornge. We never get away from that.

I'd just like to say that the whistle-blowing protection is something that's very well set out in the act: "No person shall retaliate against another person, whether by action or omission, or threaten to do so," because of many reasons. "Retaliate" includes dismissing a staff member; disciplining or suspending a staff member; imposing a penalty upon any person; and intimidating, coercing or harassing any person.

The whistle-blowing part of this legislation is extremely important. We have all these good people on the front line for us, saving patients every day. An Ornge employee can phone the independent ethics officer, Grant Thornton LLP, to get information about the process. All disclosures will be made in writing—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M. Grant Crack: Il me fait un grand plaisir et un grand honneur de souhaiter la bienvenue à tous les participants du septième Parlement jeunesse à l'Assemblée législative. Ils sont ici à Queen's Park cette semaine pour approfondir leurs connaissances du gouvernement et pour participer à une simulation parlementaire, tout en français. Ils sont ici en haut dans les galeries de l'ouest et l'est, et j'aimerais que nous les accueillions avec un chaud applaudissement. Merci beaucoup, et bonjour à tous les élèves.

M. Gilles Bisson: J'aimerais reconnaître les élèves des secondaires qui viennent de Hearst, de Kap, de Moon-

beam et de Timmins. Ils font partie de ce parlement. Hier soir on a eu l'honneur d'être ici dans l'Assemblée, puis expliquer ce qui se passe. On veut leur dire bienvenue et beaux travaux cet après-midi.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Charlie Violin is our page captain today. Family and friends have come to see him: his mother, Susan; his brother, Jack; his sister, Grace; and their friend, Amisha Agrawal. Congratulations, and welcome.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, we are all used to Speaker Dave, but this morning I'd like to introduce Actor Dave, who made his television debut in a little guest spot on Murdoch Mysteries this week solving a murder right here in Queen's Park in 1901. You looked really good, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I hope I'm not considered a visitor.

Member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would like to introduce in the west members' gallery today Charlie Bossy, who hails from my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and is currently a student at Ryerson University. Welcome, Charlie.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to welcome Camilia Hanna, who is a constituent of mine and the president of the International Women's Association of Toronto, to Queen's Park today. Welcome.

M. Michael Mantha: J'aimerais vous introduire à un jeune homme de l'É.S.C. Trillium de Chapleau, M. Robert Tessier, qui est ici avec ses collègues, avec les étudiants francophones.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'd like to introduce a guest from the heavenly Legislature. I rise today to acknowledge that Canadians lost a great patron yesterday, Stompin' Tom Connors. As many of you will know, the name Stompin' Tom was first used in Peterborough when he was introduced by Boyd MacDonald—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ce n'est pas souvent que j'ai de la visite deux fois dans la même semaine. J'ai Zacharie Gagné du Collège Notre-Dame, Tina-Marie Gagné de l'école catholique Champlain, et Krystelle Larrivée, qui, elle aussi, est de l'école catholique Champlain, dans le cadre du Parlement jeunesse francophone. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue aux élèves de l'école Samuel-Genest dans la circonscription d'Ottawa—Vanier.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm pleased to introduce Maddy Stieva and Mey Fung, who are in the members' west gallery today. They are members of the Ontario PC Youth Association—

Applause.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: We start 'em young. Welcome.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Ajax page Jessica Kostuch's mother, Christine Kostuch; father, Jim Kostuch; and twin sister, Kristen

Kostuch. They are sitting in the public gallery. I know that Jessica is honoured to have her mother, father and twin sister here this morning showing their support on her last day at the Legislature and one on which she is page captain. I welcome you to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to introduce in the Legislature today Beth Elder, a very capable OLIP intern. She's working in our office. I want to welcome to Queen's Park her dad, Phil Elder, who's visiting from Calgary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery, we have Gilles Morin from Carleton East in the 33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th—also, Steve Peters, Elgin—Middlesex—London, 37th, 38th and 39th, and Speaker of the House.

Also in our gallery is Peter Milliken, former House of Commons—the Speaker—from Kingston and the Islands, from 1998 to 2011. Was anyone not born on that date? Sorry.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: It's 1988.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Speaker, 1988.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Nineteen eighty-eight.

Anyway, it is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

Good morning, Premier. I wonder, when you first heard of Project Vapour, if you ever asked anyone what the actual cost of cancelling the Oakville gas plant would be, and I wonder if you blindly went along with whatever the Liberal talking points were that were handed out, or if you actually wanted to know the real cost of cancelling.

Let me share some of those facts, Premier. The documents we have show that TransCanada was offered a \$712-million compensation package, but they turned it down. They turned down \$712 million. Now you and your energy minister insist that they settled for \$40 million. So tell me, Premier: Did they really settle for \$40 million?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Energy and the government House leader are going to want to weigh in on the supplementary questions.

I just want to say that I'm very pleased that the justice committee is now under way, that the justice committee is calling people to come and appear before it and are going to be able to ask all of the questions that the committee members deem appropriate. I have said that I agree that I will appear before the committee, and I'll be happy to respond. But, Mr. Speaker, I think what's really significant is that that committee has the scope now to be

able to ask questions about tendering, planning, commissioning, cancellation, relocation. I'm really glad that the justice committee has that broader scope and will be able to explore the issues that the member opposite is interested in hearing about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, we have here the year-end financial report from TransCanada. That's the company that was contracted to build the cancelled Oakville gas plant. In their year-end report, it shows that the company has so far received \$250 million in compensation from the provincial government. This is printed in their annual report—\$250 million, so far.

Even the head of the Ontario Power Authority would not stand by your figures on Oakville or Mississauga at his recent news conference.

So, Premier, I'll ask you again: Will you stick with your story that they settled for \$40 million?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, not only has the committee been charged with looking into this issue, but the Auditor General is also examining this issue. I think we should wait for his report, and we should also let the committee do its work.

I'd remind members that the reason why the committee is able to look at the issue of costing is because this House passed a motion unanimously to expand it. But what's very strange, Mr. Speaker, is that the offer was made to the opposition and it took them a week of considering whether they wanted to expand it, which has been part of their strange behaviour all along. First they opposed the gas plant during the election, and then when we did exactly what they promised, they stood up and said it was the worst scandal that had ever befallen us. Then, the member from Cambridge spoke about a public inquiry and said it was too expensive, and the member from Nipissing held a press conference calling for a public inquiry. Then we offered them a select committee—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

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Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that.

Let's get this down to the facts here. You believe that this is a \$40-million hit to the taxpayer when TransCanada so far has shown payments of \$250 million in their financial reports, and the documents that were turned over in one of the document dumps show a contract—an offer—of \$712 million that was turned down because they believe they're entitled to more. So you're at \$40 million; they turned down \$712 million.

We asked you yesterday to apologize to this House for not telling us what we need to know; we asked all of your members. It appears that being a Liberal means never having to say you're sorry.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. John Milloy: To the Minister of Energy, Speaker.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member says that we should deal with the facts. I agree with him 100%. We should deal with the facts—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Member from Lambton, second time. Let's make it clear. Member from Lambton, you are now warned.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member says we should deal with the facts and, I agree with him 100%. We should deal with all of the facts.

On that particular cost assessment, the province did, in fact, pay for very expensive equipment on behalf of the vendor, on behalf of the developer. But what he didn't say is that that extra cost above the \$40 million was 100% set off by a reduction in the price of the energy, and it ends up with a net cost of \$40 million, the number that the OPA has fully determined.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker: The chief executive officer of TransCanada confirmed that that's what the deal was.

POWER PLANTS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Premier. On September 25, 2012, the Premier, in her former role as a senior minister in Dalton McGuinty's cabinet, stood in this House and quoted an article written by Dalton McGuinty. And I quote from Hansard: "This week, our government announced we are relocating a gas plant from Oakville to eastern Ontario. The total cost of the relocation is \$40 million. This follows another settlement to move a natural gas plant from Mississauga to Sarnia. The cost of that relocation was \$190 million."

Since Premier Wynne was in cabinet when the decision was made, and since she read it into the record, my question is simple: Does she stand by those numbers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the government House leader, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, there is a committee of the Legislature—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Who's next?

Hon. John Milloy: There's a committee of the Legislature which is currently looking into this issue, as well as the Auditor General.

In fact, the committee heard this morning from a very esteemed witness, the former Speaker of the House of Commons and noted parliamentary expert, the Honourable Peter Milliken, whom you recognized a little bit earlier.

And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, when you look at Mr. Milliken's testimony. For example, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville asked, "Let's start with one question. Minister Bentley ultimately complied. Shouldn't that end the matter?" This is what former Speaker Milliken had to say: "If he complied with the de-

mand for the production of the documents, I would have thought he would have"—yes, "if" he complied—"I don't know why there would have been a breach. I don't understand that." Again, showing the fact that what started out as an attempt by this government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. That's better.

Supplementary?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Again, Mr. Speaker, it is a simple question. The Premier herself stood in this Legislature and read that statement into the record. It is a legitimate question.

Let me read it again. Kathleen Wynne, September 25, 2012, and I quote from Hansard: "This week, our government announced we are relocating a gas plant from Oakville to eastern Ontario. The ... cost of the relocation is \$40 million. This follows another settlement to move a natural gas plant from Mississauga to Sarnia. The cost of that relocation was \$190 million."

A simple yes or no will do. Do you stand by those numbers? Is what the government announced true—yes or no?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, the behaviour of the Progressive Conservative Party over the past little while has been strangely erratic. First, they promised to cancel the Mississauga power plant, and then when we followed through on their promise, they said that it was a scandal. Then the member from Cambridge spoke about the high cost of a public inquiry, that we didn't need one. Then the member from Nipissing had a press conference saying he wanted one. Then we offered—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —a special committee of this Legislature that would look at the very issues that the member just raised, and they said they didn't want it. They wanted to go on a witch hunt over a former member of the Legislature. Then we came forward with a proposal to broaden the scope of the committee again to look into the issues that she has asked. It took them a week to get back. Then we offered them every government document, and they voted against it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement—

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Government House leader, thank God we all have five minutes of truth every day.

Again, the Premier is as tired of us asking these questions as we are of hearing her avoiding the answers. Again, on September 25, 2012, Premier Wynne stood in the Legislature and cited a price tag for the cancellation and move of an Oakville gas plant: "The total cost of the relocation is \$40 million." Documents show that the government offered TransCanada Energy \$712 million to settle the contract-breaking liability on the Oakville plant. TCE rejected that offer; they wanted \$900 million.

Premier, I have to ask, because I've honestly never seen the Liberals bargain someone down before: What

did the government put up on the table to convince TCE to suddenly settle for \$40 million?

Hon. John Milloy: If there is anyone who is avoiding answers, it's the Progressive Conservative Party. We have come forward over and over again to offer them the opportunity to discuss these very issues at committee. They rejected the idea of a special committee. It took them a week to agree to broaden the scope of the committee. And then, when we offered them every single document—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville and the member from Simcoe–Grey, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: When we offered them every single government document, to my astonishment, and I think the astonishment of everyone watching the parliamentary channel, they voted no. It is worth looking at this clip. The motion is made that the government will produce all documents far beyond the scope of any other request, and the three PCs proudly put up their hands to vote against it. If there's anyone who doesn't want to get to the bottom of this, it's that party over there.

PROROGATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo asked a question that the Premier didn't quite answer. I'd like to do it again. I'd like to ask that question again. Does the Premier agree that the cynical decision to shut down the Legislature last fall was a mistake that should not be repeated?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will say what I said before, and that is that I believe that the Premier, my predecessor, made the decision that he needed to make in order for us to have a leadership race and in order for us to be able to negotiate some contracts, and we did that.

I've also said that I look forward to the debate on prorogation that is being precipitated by the private member's bill. There are no procedures and there are no protocols that can't be looked at and that we can't have a discussion about. I think it's important to talk about those traditions, and I think that the debate this afternoon will allow us an opportunity to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: While the doors of the Legislature were locked, I talked to a lot of people all over Ontario, and they were pretty clear: They are tired of cynical, self-serving politics—the Premier just admitted to it herself, in fact—and they want to see change that puts them first for a change. The Premier can start today by admitting that her government's crass abuse of prorogation last fall was a mistake. Will she do that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Two things on this: First of all, during the prorogation, we continued to work. I made the point that there were a lot of negotiations that went on. We were able to settle with AMAPCEO—10,000 Ontario public service employees with a contract

because of that negotiation. We worked with the OMA—25,000 doctors with a contract because of that. We worked with OPSEU—two-year collective agreements with those public servants.

1050

What I said is that I was going to bring the House back as soon as possible. I said that at the first possible date—and that was February 19—I was going to bring the House back. We did that. We are here, Mr. Speaker, and I am so pleased that we are doing the work of the people of Ontario and that we'll have an opportunity to talk about this issue later today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, it's disappointing that the government and the Premier of Ontario believe that the accountability and scrutiny that our democracy is fundamentally based upon are not important in her books.

Speaker, people are hoping for a change, but when they look to this government, they're seeing a lot of the same old status quo: cuts and layoffs in hospitals and schools, dismissed with an "A-okay" by ministers; back-room lobbying to build casinos; killing rural jobs without giving people a voice; and a government that seems unwilling or unable to admit when they've made a mistake.

New Democrats think Ontarians deserve better. Why doesn't the Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I would just say that the party opposite does not have the corner on intellectual curiosity. The notion that somehow we're not interested in having a discussion about prorogation and about its uses is just wrong. It's just not true.

Every single party in this Legislature has used prorogation, Mr. Speaker. The PCs used it five times under Harris and Eves. The NDP used it three times when they were in government, Mr. Speaker. So the question is not whether—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The question is not whether prorogation is or is not a good thing. The question is: Is it working? Are the rules around it what they should be? Has it been used appropriately?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is not helping.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm open to that conversation. I'm looking forward to the debate this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It's entirely appropriate that we would ask those questions.

HOME CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. I think it's not just about asking questions, though; I think it's about providing answers to the people of the province.

Now I want to ask about the sort of change that people want to see in our health care system, Speaker. Throughout the last week, my colleagues and I have asked the Premier to make a firm commitment to a five-day home care guarantee. Will she do that today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to speak to that issue. I would say that we have said very clearly that we are committed to improving home care in the province. We referenced it in the throne speech, and we know that there is more to be done.

Mr. Speaker, we are making changes in the health care system, and the Minister of Health made an announcement today in conjunction with a member of the party opposite around preventing cancer and making sure that our young people are not exposed to tanning beds. That's an issue that was taken from the lexicon of the third party. I hope that the leader of the third party understands that we are very interested in finding ways to provide better health care to all of the people of Ontario, seniors and otherwise.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, later today the government will introduce a bill based on a bill from our health critic, France Gélinas. She put it in this place for five years now. For five years, our health critic has been trying to get this passed. Finally, the Liberals have seen the light, but that bill was killed when the government prorogued the Legislature last fall. It's a no-brainer of a bill, as is capping salaries for CEOs of hospitals and providing the 6,000 people currently waiting on a home care wait-list the home care that they need.

Will the Premier commit to real changes like this, or are we going to see more of the same old status quo from the Liberals?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very happy to rise again to talk about how important it is that we continue to invest more in home care. But, Speaker, this is not something new for our party. In 2003, there were 348,000 clients served in the community through home care. That number is now almost 620,000. We have gone so far when it comes to home care, but we are redoubling our efforts, because we know that there are still people in hospital who could be cared for at home if they had appropriate home care supports.

So, Speaker, there are changes in our health care system. We hear about them here every day. But everything we're doing is focused on getting more people the care they need in the most appropriate place, and that very often is at home.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats think that we should invest our precious health care dollars in getting seniors into home care within five days of being approved, but the government seems content with the status

quo, where CEO salaries stay high and nurses lose their jobs.

Will the Premier explain to Ontarians why they should wait 262 days for home care while the CEO of a hospital can make more in bonuses than most families make in a year?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I've said here before, when someone needs that home care immediately, if they're being discharged from the hospital, for example, the wait time is zero; there is no wait time.

We are bringing wait times down, though. We've gone from 13 days to nine days, and we are investing more, and as we invest more in home care, we will see those wait times come down.

Again, we have such strong common ground on this; we both want the same thing. It's wonderful to see at least two parties in the Legislature agreeing that the focus on home care is the right focus.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. Since 2007, the emergency health services branch has reported some 24 cases to the coroner of Ontario in which operational issues at Ornge may have contributed to the death of a patient.

On August 15 of last year, the chief coroner, Dr. Andrew McCallum, announced the establishment of an expert panel to review those deaths. That report was to have been filed by the end of this past year. But instead, on December 19, the new Ornge board announced that the same Dr. Andrew McCallum, the chief coroner of Ontario, had been hired as the new CEO and president of Ornge.

I want to ask the minister this: First, where is that report? And, second, at what point in the course of the coroner's investigation of those deaths did Ornge begin to make an offer of employment to the coroner?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I find the suggestion embedded in that question to be a very offensive suggestion, frankly. Dr. Andrew McCallum is a very, very highly regarded person. He is extremely well qualified to be the CEO at Ornge, and the suggestion that he would not do his job as coroner is extraordinarily offensive. I reject it wholeheartedly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The first question was, where's the report? The second question is, at what point in the investigation that the coroner was undertaking did Ornge or the government begin negotiating an employment contract with the same coroner who was investigating the organization?

So my question—I'll put it again, in a different way—whose judgment should we be calling into question: the government's and Ornge's for entering into negotiations for an employment contract with the coroner of Ontario who was investigating them, or is it Dr. McCallum's judgment that we call into question for even entertaining such an offer?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the member opposite, I think, owes some people an apology for that question, but let me answer it nonetheless.

Speaker, Dr. Dan Cass is heading the investigation—*Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now, my editorial: Don't start up.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, Dr. Don Cass is heading up the investigation of those incidents related to Ornge. I think it's important that the coroner did take this on as a special project. Dr. Cass, from the beginning, was heading that investigation.

I welcome that report. We are determined to do anything we can do to make it better, to improve patient safety, Speaker. That report, that investigation, is under way. The member opposite knows that that is happening, and he's being nothing but mischievous today.

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CASINOS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier.

Yesterday the government shrugged off concerns that the Liberal-appointed chair of Metrolinx is also a paid lobbyist for MGM Resorts, an organization that wants to put a casino in downtown Toronto. Today we learned that another Metrolinx board member is also a paid lobbyist for the Nevada-based company.

Considering that MGM's casino plans will have substantial impact on transit and traffic in this city, how does the Premier not see significant conflict of interest with two Metrolinx board members—the very government agency responsible for transit—also being paid lobbyists for MGM Resorts?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: There are very, very clear and strict rules governing all of these bodies. All of these bodies, by their very nature, invite very significant business leaders on to them. Mr. Turnbull has an incredible reputation with TD Bank and TD Securities, one of our most reputable financial institutions. Mr. Prichard has been president of our most significant university and a senior executive with our daily newspaper. This is a man of incredible ethical renown, Mr. Speaker. They have followed the rules very carefully. All of the routes have been planned, and both these gentlemen are following those rules and excluding themselves fully from any conversations relating to this particular piece of property or any piece of property that would involve any clients they have.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, Torontonians are not keen to have a Las Vegas-style casino in this city, yet this government would rather ignore their concerns and stand by while Liberal appointees to Metrolinx are being paid by MGM to lobby provincial officials for a casino in Toronto.

Can the Premier explain why she's choosing to listen to Liberal insiders who stand to gain from a casino in Toronto instead of the very residents whose community will be affected?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the air of irony coming from the party that brought gambling and casinos to Ontario verges on satire. I never, ever thought I would live to see the day to see such chutzpah in this House from the parties opposite, who downloaded onto municipalities like crazy, talking to us, who introduced the City of Toronto Act respecting the integrity of the city council, quite frankly, where the members of that party almost have a majority.

I think we can trust the New Democratic members of city council and others to have that kind of authority with the responsibility—what their party has always asked us to have. We're the party that has been uploading from municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, this is just bordering on precious. I cannot believe the member actually had the chutzpah to ask that question.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Speaker, I have serious concerns about the changes that could take place at the Scarborough Hospital, located in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt. Our hospital has been undertaking a process to balance their budget, and we need to make sure any service change protects the patients. I, along with my community, am concerned about potential changes to the hospital services.

Yesterday, along with the member from Scarborough—Rouge River, we released a statement calling for more public consultation to take place before any decisions are made about proposed changes at the hospital. Local residents need to have a real voice at the table and real, meaningful consultation so that they can move forward together.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: Will you support further review of the hospital's proposed changes?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to thank the members for Scarborough—Agincourt and Scarborough—Rouge River for their advocacy on this matter. I have met with them; we have discussed the issue. They have been talking to me, expressing concerns they are hearing from their constituents about proposed changes at Scarborough Hospital.

Speaker, it is vitally important that any changes hospitals make take into account the needs of patients, of course, but also physicians and health professionals who provide care in that organization.

I know Scarborough Hospital has been engaging members of the community; however, I agree with the members from Scarborough—Rouge River and Scarborough—Agincourt that further review is required. I support their call for further review on the hospital's proposed changes.

Hospitals belong to their communities, Speaker. It is vitally important that communities be engaged and have an opportunity to be engaged to make changes in hospitals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Scarborough—Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I just want to recognize the health professionals at the hospital who continue to provide care for our loved ones day in, day out with patience, dedication and compassion. They are truly the heart of this hospital and our local community.

Scarborough Hospital faces a difficult challenge, and they are currently facing a deficit they need to resolve. People in my riding understand that the status quo is not acceptable and that the hospital needs to be innovative in order to provide sustainable health care.

An important component of this is more care being provided at home or at specialized clinics in the community. However, it is incredibly important that the community be part of the process in a transparent, open and accountable manner.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: How can we be assured that the residents of north Scarborough's concerns will be addressed?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the member is absolutely right. The status quo is not an option. We know we can do better when it comes to delivering health care services. That is why we are expanding home care, and that is why we are expanding services in the community.

We have recognized from the beginning that this transformation in health care will be a challenge, but the health care sector recognizes that we do have to make important changes in how we deliver health care. I have the utmost confidence that they are ready to take on this challenge.

Part of the transformation is our work with hospitals to change how we fund hospitals. We're moving from a lump-sum funding allocation toward a patient-centred model, where funding is based on the services provided and the number of patients served. Hospitals will be paid for increasing services—where appropriate—delivering them more efficiently and serving more patients. Once hospitals adapt to this new approach, we will all see better value for money and better quality care.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, after nine and a half years of neglecting their needs, during the recent Liberal leadership race, you promised new respect for rural Ontario. In fact, your new Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment promised a share of the gas tax revenues for rural municipalities for infrastructure projects. Your new Minister of Rural Affairs promised at a meeting of Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus that you would be bringing forth gas tax sharing for rural municipalities.

Speaker, today the rubber meets the road. Will you support my gas tax bill that will be debated this afternoon in the Legislature that we'll share gas tax revenue with all municipalities? Will you instruct your caucus to finally show some real respect for rural Ontario to support that gas tax bill?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Transportation is going to want to weigh in on this, but I'm—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, we don't want to hear from him.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, you're going to hear from me first, to the member opposite.

Once again, I think that private members' time is a really important opportunity for questions to be raised, for issues to be discussed across all parties, Mr. Speaker. I think that there are a number of issues. This is one of them. I know prorogation is another discussion that's going to happen this afternoon. The OMB, I believe, is going to be discussed this afternoon. There are a number of issues that it's very important that people across the parties have the opportunity to weigh in on. So I'm very pleased that the member opposite has raised this question and that there will be a debate on it this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is also for the Premier. Premier, can you explain why you voted against Mr. Yakabuski's PMB in the past—seven times, I believe? Yet today you expect the people of Ontario to believe you are sincere when you say this needs to be a priority.

Will you finally put action behind your words, and will you commit today to providing a percentage of the gas tax to rural and northern Ontario municipalities?

1110

Premier, will you show respect for rural and northern Ontario, vote later today to support the motion being introduced by my colleague Mr. Yakabuski, and provide rural Ontario with their fair share of the gas tax revenue?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You know, today must be the international day of chutzpah.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken funding—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General is not helping.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We have taken the infrastructure budgets in this province from a pathetic \$3 billion to \$4 billion, to \$12.9 billion this year. We are twinning highways in the north.

Mr. Speaker, not only do we put the gas tax into transit to take congestion off roads in communities like Orillia—there are over 90 communities small and large

that get it—we also introduced MIII, which is a \$90-million program that repairs bridges and roads, exactly what this gentleman is talking about.

More than that; this government is committed to going—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. Agriculture and food processing create over 700,000 jobs in Ontario and have an economic impact of over \$50 billion, and we all know that farmers are the cornerstone of this economic engine.

Farm commodity groups, like green farmers of Ontario, worked tirelessly to push the government to create the Risk Management Program—which you did.

Farmers need to feel confident that the funds available to help them out in times of need will be sufficient for the viability of the sector. The cap on the program has shaken farmers' confidence in the government's true commitment to agriculture.

As Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food, are you prepared to take action on this issue?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite noted that we have worked with commodity groups. We have worked very hard to make sure that the program was in place and that it worked for the groups. That's why my predecessor brought groups in, had a conversation with them and made sure that, as the program was designed, it was designed according to the parameters that they thought were important.

My response is that we will continue to work with those groups, and if there are changes that need to be made, we will make those changes in consultation with the people who are using the program.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, to the Premier: Ontario farmers grow the food on which the processing sector depends, but growing food is a risky venture. The Risk Management Program not only protects farmers; it protects the processing sector and the consumers who want to buy Ontario food, yet this government chose to cap the Risk Management Program, which, in fact, leaves farmers grossly underinsured. If farmers are at risk, so is the entire sector and all the jobs it creates.

Will your government act to help farmers so that they are fully insured to drive the economic engine of this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The redesigned program that my predecessor worked on with the sector includes some things like an industry-managed premium fund, so they're managing the fund themselves. I know that the member opposite knows that that was a very popular and a very good move, and I've certainly had feedback from farmers that that was a good thing.

But then there are some specific things that we've done to demonstrate our commitment to making sure that

farming is sustainable—\$104 million for farmers in drought this year—responding to needs that are relevant in a particular year or particular season. We'll continue to do those things, respond in a timely way, and we'll continue to work with the farmers as we develop programs that respond to their needs on an annual basis.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Phil McNeely: Cette question est pour la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones.

Notre province, l'Ontario, compte maintenant plus de 600 000 francophones. Lorsque je rencontre des commettants francophones, j'ai toujours constaté à quel point notre gouvernement a offert, au cours des 10 dernières années, un soutien constant pour la communauté francophone de l'Ontario.

Alors que nous venons de renouveler notre gouvernement, j'aimerais savoir, quels sont les nouveaux engagements pour la communauté francophone de l'Ontario?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais remercier le député d'Ottawa-Orléans pour son appui constant dans la francophonie. Je voudrais aussi souhaiter la bienvenue à nos étudiants qui sont ici du Parlement jeunesse.

Je suis très heureuse de ce que mon gouvernement a fait depuis 2003 en francophonie, que ce soit l'indépendance de la chaîne TFO; que ce soit le poste de commissaire aux services en français; que ce soit la journée franco-ontarienne; que ce soit la cible de 5 % en immigration francophone dont on vient de se doter; que ce soit l'amélioration de la justice en français—je voudrais féliciter mon collègue de tout le travail qu'il a fait—que ce soit l'augmentation du financement en éducation : 80 % d'augmentation. Nous avons maintenant 437 écoles. Justement, la semaine dernière, j'étais à Sault Ste. Marie et j'ai vu la nouvelle école, Notre-Dame-du-Sault, qui est une école extraordinaire. Je voudrais souhaiter la bienvenue à Alexandre et Nathan, qui sont ici de Sault Ste. Marie.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary question?

M. Phil McNeely: Je suis heureux de voir que notre engagement demeure infaillible. Hier, j'étais au Parlement jeunesse, ici même à Queen's Park. Celui-ci donne l'occasion à des élèves francophones du secondaire de toute la province de se rendre à Toronto pour en apprendre plus sur l'Assemblée législative.

Encore à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones : quelles sont nos priorités en termes d'éducation postsecondaire en français?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Tôt en 2003, je me suis aperçue que l'éducation postsecondaire dans le sud-ouest de l'Ontario n'était pas ce qu'elle devrait être. Alors, j'étais très heureuse de voir que notre première ministre, lors du discours du trône, a donné son engagement pour améliorer l'éducation postsecondaire dans le sud et le sud-ouest de l'Ontario. Alors, on veut, bien sûr—nos étudiants qui vont graduer du secondaire et qui sont ici veulent, s'ils demeurent dans la région, pouvoir pour-

suivre leurs études en français. On sait qu'on a le Collège Boréal, La Cité collégiale, l'Université d'Ottawa, l'Université de Hearst, l'Université Laurentienne et aussi l'université bilingue de Glendon, mais nos jeunes veulent étudier dans le sud et dans le sud-ouest de l'Ontario en français. Alors, c'est un projet qui va aller de l'avant.

Je remercie la première ministre d'appuyer la communauté francophone pour les études postsecondaires.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Premier, during your campaign for the Liberal leadership, you visited my riding and you were briefed on the ridiculousness of a German company's proposal to build eight 500-foot-tall wind turbines on a flight path of the Collingwood Regional Airport. The turbines being proposed are almost as tall as the TD tower down the street here in Toronto.

At the time, you told my constituents that, if you were successful in your leadership bid, you would bring the Collingwood proposal to the direct attention of the Minister of Energy. You also said, "If there's a safety issue ... an economic issue ... we need to understand how that happened.... To have that airport shut down (because of turbines) doesn't make sense to me."

Premier, can you confirm today that you kept your word and tell us what you've done to stop this dangerous proposal from going ahead?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm glad there will be two opportunities, and I'll have an opportunity to answer his supplementary.

What I want to say to the member and to the opposition is that we understand that you do not approve of green energy policies or initiatives. That's number one.

We also acknowledge that they don't—

Interjections.

1120

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: At the appropriate time, we'll have an opportunity once again to have that debate with the electors across the province of Ontario; the same as we will on full-day kindergarten, which you don't approve of; the same as on uploading to municipalities. You've downloaded; you want to keep the expenses down with the municipalities. There's a whole series of issues where we have to agree to disagree. That should—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Chatham, the member from Huron—Bruce—and about four others, but I'll get to you later—come to order. And I honestly think I heard somebody try to sneak by a swear word.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Righteous indignation aside, I would ask all members to be honourable in this place.

Supplementary, please.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue about safety and the rights of people in rural Ontario, which you don't give a damn about. That's for sure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, I'd appreciate an answer from you. You're the one who made the commitment when you visited Collingwood.

On February 20, I introduced legislation that amends the Planning Act by reversing the amendments made by the Liberals' Green Energy Act that exempted renewable energy projects from the municipal process. My bill restores municipal planning powers and allows local leaders to make decisions over renewable energy projects like the one being proposed on the flight path of Collingwood Regional Airport.

Premier, when you visited my riding, you said you support more municipal autonomy and a better process for siting these projects. Will you show Ontarians that you can actually stay true to your word? Will you commit today to supporting my legislation and restore municipal control over renewable energy projects that are being built in vast areas of the province against the people's wishes?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is honouring her commitment. The Minister of Rural Affairs, the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Municipal Affairs are working now together to look at the types of solutions that the Premier committed to enlisting for the province of Ontario.

We are extremely serious about giving more control to the municipalities, about dealing with Planning Act issues and about dealing with the level of control that particularly rural municipalities will have over wind and solar in their communities. We are absolutely committed, and we will be back to you very soon with alternatives and solutions that we believe will be satisfactory to the rural communities across the province of Ontario.

OBSTETRICAL CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Pregnant moms in Windsor are worried. As cuts mount to front-line care workers, hospital beds and children's mental health care, Windsor mothers are left wondering if their neonatal intensive care unit is next. The Windsor NICU is already operating at reduced levels because this government refuses to guarantee funding for a level 3 facility.

Will the Premier protect Windsor's most vulnerable babies and clear up any doubt about the future of neonatal care in Windsor?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's wonderful to see the new focus on Windsor and London that we are seeing from the leader of the third party. It's fantastic to see that.

I can tell you, Speaker, that we are doing everything we can to protect patient care. This is an issue that has been raised in the past. I know that the people of Windsor are advocating for this. I can tell you that the interests of those babies, the interests of those mothers will always be paramount. We will do what we need to do to make sure that babies born get the very, very best possible care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, somebody's got to be standing up for the people of Windsor and London. New Democrats are proud to do it.

The Windsor neonatal intensive care unit will change the lives of hundreds of moms and babies this year. Without access to a fully functioning NICU, pregnant moms, in a fragile condition, will be sent down the highway for care. The last time New Democrats brought concerns about the Windsor NICU to this Legislature, the Minister of Health said this: "We will always make decisions based on what's best for those babies." But, recently, she also said she's okay with cuts to front-line health care services in Windsor.

What does the Premier have to say to Windsor mothers who are worried that that city's neonatal intensive care unit is next on the chopping block?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, there has been no change in the designation of the NICU at Windsor Regional Hospital.

We have invested enormously in Windsor Regional Hospital; in fact, their funding has increased by \$100 million. That's an 83% increase in funding at Windsor Regional Hospital. The hospital is continuing to make improvements. The neonatal unit is a very important part of Windsor Regional Hospital.

We will continue to improve care, and I will always say, whatever is best for those little babies who are born with high health care needs will always guide my decision-making.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

I know that continued economic growth and job creation are key priorities for our government, and that our ongoing investments in crucial public infrastructure have helped our economic recovery a great deal.

In my own riding of Vaughan, there are plans to extend Highway 427 from its current end at Zenway Boulevard to Major Mackenzie Drive. This roughly seven-kilometre extension will help my community unlock tremendous economic development potential in the Vaughan enterprise zone, an area of hundreds and hundreds of acres that has the potential to generate tens of thousands of jobs when fully built out. However, the potential of the Vaughan enterprise zone cannot be fully realized until Highway 427 is extended.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please update the House as to the progress being made regarding the extension of Highway 427?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank my friend the member for Vaughan for his unrelenting advocacy for Highway 427—and when I say "unrelenting," I mean just about daily, Mr. Speaker.

Highway 427 is an important priority for us. We're very proud of our partnerships with Mayor Bevilacqua—and the mayors of Vaughan and Caledon, who have been working very hard with their economic development agency, which has seen a significant expansion of employment lands, major new investments by Canadian Tire and Canadian Pacific Railway. This is becoming one of the most successful and dynamic areas of our province.

We have invested over \$300 million in that area. We will continue to do that, and there is an additional \$620 million in transit funding that will relieve some of the car pressures on that highway.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much to the minister for that update. My constituents in Vaughan will be very happy to hear of the progress that's being made on this important issue.

In addition to the tremendous possibilities that exist in terms of job creation, the extension of Highway 427 will help to alleviate some of the gridlock that is currently depriving the residents of my community, particularly those living in Kleinburg and in west Woodbridge, of time with their families. In fact, I spent time last evening in Kleinburg at a town hall meeting and I heard about this issue directly from my residents.

Can the minister please inform the House of the measures being taken by our government to ensure that progress continues to be made on this issue and other transit-related issues in my area?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, we have about a \$13-billion infrastructure commitment this year alone. That is the biggest, I think, in the modern history of our province, and up from about \$3 billion when the parties opposite were in power. In Vaughan, this has resulted in \$1.4 billion over 10 years for the vivaNext rapid transit system, a \$670-million investment to extend the Spadina subway to Vaughan, and this 8.6-kilometre extension of the 427 is the next critical and priority piece of infrastructure. We are serving rural folks with our new MIIB program, which extends that to small bridges.

We will not do what the party opposite—which is, compete between the suburbs, rural and urban Ontario for scarce dollars. We are going to build new revenue tools, under our Premier's leadership, to ensure that every Ontarian has access to great infrastructure.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Premier. During the 2011 election, you were Minister of Transportation. At a campaign stop in Burlington, you prom-

ised—promised—that the controversial Niagara-to-GTA highway route through north Burlington was cancelled. On February 19 of this year, the MTO held its final public information session in Ancaster on the progress of the environmental assessment for the north Burlington route of the highway. It wasn't cancelled; it's continuing.

1130

Premier, during an election and for political advantage, are my constituents in north Burlington correct in saying that they were misled?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Withdraw.

Premier, what conclusions should my constituents in north Burlington draw from the promise you made during the campaign?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, first, the advice I give them is that whatever you do, don't vote Conservative, because you'd be voting for a government that has never committed more than \$3 billion or \$4 billion to infrastructure, and all of these projects would be a pipe dream.

Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Interjection: What's your leader's position?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My position and that of the previous two Ministers of Transportation is that we would do everything else and look at it in that context.

We have done the road studies. They are tabled; they are public documents. I would suggest the member opposite look at them. He should talk to his friend the critic, because he and I have been meeting and we've had a very fulsome conversation about that. Or maybe he wants to talk to the member for Burlington, who wrote a letter to us just a year ago, asking us not to build the mid-Niagara—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I am always open to the many opinions that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This isn't about the highway between Hamilton airport and the Niagara frontier. This is about a promise that you made during an election. Premier, you made a promise to the voters of north Burlington, not the current minister. Premier, you told them the highway was cancelled across the north Burlington area, not this current minister. Premier, you caused the current angst by failing to fulfil your promise, if you ever intended to do so.

Premier, do the right thing: Fulfil your promise. Or was it just a smoke-and-mirrors announcement to win a few votes in a typical Liberal way? Premier, fulfil your promise and stop lying to my constituents.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The member will withdraw.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Reluctantly withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do know this part of my job. The member please withdraw.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question—sorry; answer.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to take this opportunity to respond to the member opposite, because I remember the meeting that I was at in the Burlington area. I remember having that conversation very clearly, Mr. Speaker. And what I said was that I acknowledged that there was a lot of concern about the corridor that was being identified for that road. What I promised was that we were going to do everything possible to make sure that we had an integrated transportation plan for that region, because unlike the party opposite, I recognize that we need to have roads and corridors built in the province, but we also need to focus on transit. We need to focus on using the corridors and the roads that are already there. How can we maximize the use of the roads that are already there and how can we make sure that public transportation is part of any plan going forward? That's what I said to the people of Burlington, Mr. Speaker.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I have heard from thousands of people across south Niagara who are worried about health care services. Nearly 20,000 residents have signed a petition calling on the government to stop the move of important services from the Welland and Niagara Falls hospital sites to the new St. Catharines hospital. For many residents, that move means driving over an hour to access essential and sometimes urgent services. And if you're travelling on public transit, which is—

Interjection: Non-existent.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —non-existent in many of the municipalities in my riding, the trip could take as long as four hours each way. Will the minister commit to preserving existing health care services in south Niagara?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I understand that health care in Niagara has been a topic of much discussion in that area, and I certainly hear from the member of St. Catharines about what we must do to improve health care in the Niagara region, and from the member from Niagara Falls.

What I can tell you is, things are a lot better at Niagara Health System than they were a short time ago. I want to say thank you to Dr. Kevin Smith, who was appointed supervisor of NHS some time ago. The supervisor was appointed because the community had concerns about care at Niagara Health System.

NHS is moving forward. It is implementing the necessary measures to improve patient care. We know there's more to do, but I do think that we are absolutely on the right track when it comes to Niagara.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: People are worried that the ribbons that are being cut today at the new St. Catharines hospital will mean out-of-business signs for south Niagara. Residents know that re-establishing the services close to home, which is part of the long-term-care plan for hospitals, is years away at best. This gap in services is unacceptable. Many residents worry that those services will never return to south Niagara.

Experts in my riding like Dr. Andrei Arvinte, president of the Niagara Health System Medical Staff Association, are concerned that once these services like obstetrics and pediatrics are moved out of the area, other health care services will follow, and the expertise, the staff and the money will leave south Niagara hospital services.

Will the minister listen to the residents of south Niagara and preserve these important services for the residents of south Niagara?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure you that those voices are being heard loud and clear, and I know that Dr. Smith has spent a considerable amount of time travelling in the south Niagara area listening to the concerns, and he has come forth with some recommendations on how we can improve care in south Niagara.

I do want to take the opportunity to celebrate the opening of the new hospital in St. Catharines, which will provide service to the people of south Niagara as well. One big advantage is that people will be able to receive cancer treatment in Niagara. They would have previously had to travel to Hamilton. They will now be able to get it much closer to home.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier, on a point of order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to correct my record. In answer to a question about risk management, I said that farmers received \$104 million. In fact, it was \$106 million, on top of \$41 million through the Growing Forward programs for farmers damaged by drought.

STOMPIN' TOM CONNORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would seek unanimous consent of the House that, upon the death of one of Canada's most patriotic sons, the flags would fly at half-mast for Stompin' Tom Connors.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Unanimous consent was asked for the acknowledgement of the death of Stompin' Tom Connors and that our flags fly at half-mast. Is it the pleasure of the House that—can I say today?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, on the day of the funeral.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the day of the funeral. Agreed? Agreed.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I seek unanimous consent that we sing the song.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We most definitely would get a no.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Hey, I'm allowed my jabs.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Halton has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning the Niagara-to-GTA highway. This matter will be—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Check your diary, Ted. Check your diary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Check your heckling. I'm not even finished yet. Let me finish.

This matter will be debated on Tuesday, March 19.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

ESTIMATES

Hon. David Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, I have a message from David C. Onley, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province of Ontario for the year ending March 31, 2013, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly. Toronto, March 6, 2013, David C. Onley.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I have a group of citizens from the great riding of Oxford county in the members' gallery today. They are here for the part of the meeting that comes later—petitions—as I officially present the petition they have gathered names on. We have with us Shirley Schuurman, Mary Ellen Borndahl, Wayne Walden, Monika Rauch, Deb Tait and Terry Coleman. We welcome them to Queen's Park. Thank you very much for indulging me in presenting this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: We have four representatives from the cancer society with us, who will be here to witness the Skin Cancer Prevention Act. This is Florentina Stancu-Soare, Joanne Di Nardo, Rowena Pinto and Nicole McInerney. Welcome to Queen's Park and thank you for all your help.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We always welcome our guests. Thank you.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have a great friend and companion up in the gallery today who just had lunch with

and is here to watch what goes on in the House: Phil Lightstone from the riding of Thornhill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. We welcome our guest.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: We're joined today in the members' gallery by Sydney Clark. Sydney is an intern at SickKids hospital and is here to see how we do things at Queen's Park today.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to extend a special welcome to members of the Polish community in the greater Toronto area who are here with us today. Join me in giving them our very warm welcome to this place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): *Remarks in Polish.*

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? There being no further introductions—just a moment, please. I had to remember that I had arranged for this to happen. I know all members will join me in saying thank you and job well done to our pages. This is their last day, so we want to thank them. Well done. Good job.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank you for that and I understand the member from Durham said, "Make them come back next week."

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JIM ALEXANDER

Mr. Frank Klees: I rise today to pay tribute to an exemplary citizen of our province and our country. In doing so, I join with Community Living Newmarket/Aurora District, which is honouring Jim Alexander at its 11th annual community tribute dinner in recognition of his passion for volunteerism and generosity of spirit that has enriched the lives of so many.

The Community Living vision is a community where everyone belongs. Jim Alexander has not only supported that vision as a member of the Community Living board of directors, he has demonstrated that commitment by employing people with intellectual disabilities at the seven Tim Hortons franchises he and his wife Yvonne own throughout York region. In Jim's words: "They are the most dedicated employees, and really bring something to the workplace."

Not only is Jim doing his part to build a community where everyone belongs, he is giving individuals the opportunity to develop self-confidence, to be valued and to live with dignity.

Jim credits his father for instilling in him the importance of giving back to the community, and he is walking in those footsteps through his involvement with the Belinda's Place Foundation, the Southlake foundation board, the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce and St. John Chrysostom church. The town of Newmarket,

the province of Ontario and our country are better places because of Jim Alexander.

Speaker, I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Jim on being honoured with the 2013 Community Service Award by the Community Living Newmarket/Aurora District.

SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Ms. Cindy Forster: I raise an issue having a devastating impact on workers in my riding and in the Niagara Falls riding. When US-based company Vertis Communications declared bankruptcy and laid off some 100 employees, they strategically avoided paying these workers their owed severance pay, to the amount of \$2.7 million. By declaring bankruptcy in the US, they circumvented labour laws in this country, and are denying workers their right to severance.

Many of these workers have 30 to 35 years of service at the plant, and merely expect their rights will be upheld and severance will be granted. However, it's become quite clear that Vertis has no intention of honouring their rights, leaving these workers with no recourse but to picket outside the plant in hope that public pressure and media attention will force Vertis to live up to its legal and moral obligations. Their efforts are in vain, though. Instead of being granted the right to severance, these workers have now been served summons to appear in court today for an injunction to end the picketing.

Quad/Graphics, the company that purchased the equipment and supplies, wish to remove these from the plant, and have gone so far as to ask for damages from these employees for the alleged loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars. These are the same employees that are owed \$2.7 million in severance.

This is an affront to these workers and a shameful result of no-strings-attached relationships that our government currently has with US-based corporations. What is the government prepared to do to prevent attacks on workers' rights from happening in the future?

STOMPIN' TOM CONNORS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise today to acknowledge that Canadians lost a great patriot yesterday in Stompin' Tom Connors. As many of you know, the name Stompin' Tom was first used in Peterborough when he was introduced by Boyd MacDonald, who was a waiter at the King George Tavern. His career originally took off in 1960 when he started singing for beer in Timmins.

In honour of the passing of this legend, I don't think there's any better way I could pay tribute than to read from his final letter to Canadians. It reads as follows:

"Hello friends, I want all my fans, past, present, or future, to know that without you, there would have not been any Stompin' Tom."

"It was a long, hard, bumpy road, but this great country kept me inspired with its beauty, character, and spirit, driving me to keep marching on and devoted to

sing about its people and places that make Canada the greatest country in the world.

"I must now pass the torch to all of you, to help keep the Maple Leaf flying high, and be the patriot Canada needs now and in the future.

"I humbly thank you all, one last time, for allowing me in your homes. I hope I continue to bring a little bit of cheer into your lives from the work I have done.

"Sincerely,

"Your friend always,

"Stompin' Tom Connors"

And just like the good ol' hockey game, Stompin' Tom will always have a place in our hearts.

ISRAELI APARTHEID WEEK

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise on behalf of Tim Hudak and the entire Ontario PC caucus to condemn anti-Israel activities of any kind. There is no place in our province or country for hatred towards any group anywhere, especially on our university campuses. The Ontario PC caucus has been—and always will be—a champion of human rights, including freedom of speech.

Public debate in Ontario should be informed, respectful and fair to all who seek to express an opinion. Those behind the events of Israeli Apartheid Week, or IAW, take untenable, unilateral positions and offer no reasonable room for discussion. Their campaign is aimed solely at denying Israel's right to exist, and IAW's proponents do nothing at all to promote any kind of reconciliation or real dialogue.

1310

IAW seeks to intentionally intimidate supporters of Israel and lessen their feelings of security. For the past eight years, university campuses and their students have been the central targets of IAW. I do not condone any university using its campus for these activities.

I am proud to have tabled and unanimously passed a resolution in 2010 that transcended the political divide with the full endorsement of all parties in the Legislature that condemned the use of the term "Israeli Apartheid Week." We must continue to encourage Canadians to stand up and speak out against hatred of all forms.

The Ontario PC caucus stands united with Ontario's Jewish community to condemn Israeli Apartheid Week and all forms of hatred.

STOMPIN' TOM CONNORS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I join colleagues in the House today on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party to pay our tributes and respect to a Canadian icon whom we lost last evening.

On behalf of New Democrats, we are all saddened to hear of the passing of Stompin' Tom Connors. From humble beginnings to the Order of Canada, Stompin' Tom was a Canadian icon who was revered from coast to coast. His songs brought Ontario to the world. He was a

promoter of rural Canada and of farmers, bringing the PEI potato and the Leamington tomato together like I don't think anyone else could have in our Canadian lexicon.

With his signature cowboy hat and stompin' boots, his country folk songs like Canada Day, the Hockey Song, Bud the Spud and Sudbury Saturday Night made us all stomp our feet, clap our hands and sing along. The man may be gone, but his music will never die.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to himself, his friends, his family and his fans. It is quite poignant, if you look at his last remarks: He asked all Canadians not to send flowers to his service but instead to send a donation to your local food bank or homeless shelter. Stompin' Tom was an advocate for the poor and the working class in this province and this country who need support and need help.

Thank you, Stompin' Tom, for your years of service and arts to our community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): He also helped with plywood sales.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Hear, hear.

LEGOLAND DISCOVERY CENTRE

Mr. Steven Del Duca: On March 1, I was delighted to attend the official opening of the Legoland Discovery Centre in my community of Vaughan.

Nestled specifically in the Vaughan Mills shopping centre, Legoland offers the community over 3,000 square metres of fun learning space. Whether it is model-testing, building new Lego creations or watching a film in their new 4D theatre, the discovery centre has many things to offer families here in Ontario.

The Legoland Discovery Centre is truly a world-class attraction, and it has already brought a number of new jobs to Vaughan. In addition, both my riding and the surrounding areas will reap many benefits from the increased tourism as those travelling from out of town come to visit this exciting new facility.

Just as importantly, attractions such as these offer Ontario families a chance to spend valuable time together. A visit to the new Legoland facility will allow families to take time from their busy schedules to learn new skills and play in a fun and safe environment. It is a fun and interactive year-round destination for Ontario families.

I am extremely proud that such a world-class attraction has found its roots in Vaughan, and I look forward to seeing the positive effects that this centre will continue to have for my community.

If I could say, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate Merlin Entertainments Group, the Vaughan Mills mall, Vaughan Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua and the members of council and the city of Vaughan's economic development department for pulling this off and for making Legoland a reality in my community.

WIND FARMS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: On Tuesday of this week, I hand-delivered an important document to the Premier. It was a copy of the municipal consultation form regarding the Conestoga wind energy project as submitted by the municipality of North Perth. But it was much more than that. It included page after page of evidence documenting serious problems and faulty assumptions with the industrial wind farm proposal. In total, it was about an inch thick.

It also included a strongly worded letter from the mayor of North Perth. In bold letters, she writes, "The project does not have municipal support." She notes that in the survey of residents in the affected area, 96% are opposed to the project. The mayor also pointed to the Premier's promise contained in her government's throne speech to listen to municipalities when it comes to energy projects.

By now, I hope the Premier has read the mayor's letter and my letter supporting the people of North Perth. Given such overwhelming opposition to this wind farm, I am asking again for her to do the right thing. I'm asking for her to stop this proposal from going any further. If she refuses to do that, we're asking the government, at the very least, to issue another 90-day review period after the proponent tries to fill in the information gaps recorded by the municipality.

If the Premier really meant what was in the throne speech, and if she wants to prove that it wasn't just talk, she has no other choice.

POLISH-CANADIAN WOMEN

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I am delighted to welcome to Queen's Park this afternoon Marek Goldyn, founder and chair of the Canadian-Polish Foundation, and members and friends of the Canadian Polish Foundation.

I stand here today in recognition of International Women's Day and to honour in particular and pay tribute to Canadian women of Polish descent who have played a pivotal role in our lives as parliamentarians.

It is with great pleasure that I recognize our very own Dr. Helena Jaczek, from Oak Ridges-Markham. At the age of 22, Helena was the youngest medical doctor to receive her medical diploma in the province of Ontario. Helena will be honoured at the Polish Royal dinner this coming Thursday, March 14.

I wish to acknowledge Elinor Caplan, who served the Legislative Assembly as well; Elaine Ziembra, a New Democratic Party member who served; and Bonnie Crombie, currently a councillor in Mississauga, who served federally as well.

My grandparents came from the northern part of Ukraine. My grandmother is of Polish descent; she's a Starchesky. It was my grandma who taught me how to make perogies, or pyrohy, and for this I am eternally grateful.

I also want to acknowledge all those extraordinary women who followed their families to help start a new life in this country, regardless of where they came from, because it's their foundation that enables us today to live in the kind of democracy that we have. Thanks to each and every one of them, from all of us.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in this House today to voice my concerns with the implementation of recent changes to the Ontario Mining Act, specifically dealing with the filing of prospecting plans and the issuing of permits.

The new regulations that come into effect on April 1 add a significant burden to the work of prospectors and junior miners. By forcing prospectors to now file detailed plans for activities as simple as flipping stones and driving stakes, the regulatory burden is increasing on this critical first step in the mining process.

There are many concerns about issues with the new permitting process. I have already heard from concerned people in the business who are frustrated with the new system. John Chisholm described the ministry as having "an incredibly casual approach to the whole process that creates uncertainty for those in the mining business." Mr. Chisholm lost three precious weeks because his permit was delayed by the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines's online system. They would not allow the application to be couriered, because the new process is to be online-only.

This isn't just costing the developers money. It is costing Ontario jobs, jobs that could be created by new discoveries, by new mines opening and the prosperity that follows new developments into local communities. Poorly implemented regulations such as these only add duplication and pile red tape on the heads of our resource-sector job creators.

When these amendments were passed, the current government announced they would modernize the system and promised to bring the Mining Act into the 21st century. Judging by the response so far, it sounds more like a step back.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ottawa—Orléans on a point of order.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I want to welcome to this Legislature Rick Hiemstra, just above us. He's the father of John Hiemstra, one of our very capable and prominent pages. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order: the member from Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I do apologize. I wasn't in here when we were able to do the introduction of guests. Today is a very special day for me. I have a number of people from my community in Ottawa here.

Hélène Campbell—many of us know her—who appeared on Ellen, just joined me in the dining room and spoke to many of our colleagues. Hélène Campbell, of course, had a double lung transplant here in the city of Toronto just last year, and I'm pleased that she was able to join us today.

I also have a number of realtors who are here from Ottawa. I'd like to introduce them: Pat Verge, a really good friend of mine, from OREA; Linda McCallum, right beside her, from OREA; Duane Leon, also from Ottawa and from OREA.

We do have some people from the head office here in Ontario. Matthew Thornton, who used to work here for Tim Hudak, is the assistant director of government relations for OREA; and—I'm going to get this wrong—Yuliya Khraplyva. Did I get it even anywhere passable?

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Okay.

Thank you very much, Speaker, and I appreciate your indulgence.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do show lenience from time to time, and Mr. Thornton also worked for me. I'd like to point that out as well.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I just wanted to clarify a point of order: I know Matthew also spent time with the esteemed member for Brant, the wonderful Speaker Dave Levac.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There we go. You can correct your record all day long. Thank you very much.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CLANDESTINE DRUG OPERATION PREVENTION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PRÉVENTION DES OPÉRATIONS DE STUPÉFIANTS CLANDESTINES

Ms. MacLeod moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 29, An Act to amend various Acts to prevent clandestine drug operations / Projet de loi 29, Loi modifiant diverses lois afin de prévenir les opérations de stupéfiants clandestines.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much, Speaker. Again, I do have Pat Verge, Linda McCallum and Duane Leon here from the city of Ottawa to witness this bill being introduced. It's a bill that I had introduced previously, and it also made its way into the Ontario PC platform in the last election.

The bill would amend a number of acts with respect to clandestine drug operations, which are defined to be illegal operations where any substance listed in any of schedules I to IV to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act of Canada can be obtained by any method or process.

At present, under section 15.9 of the Building Code Act, 1992, an inspector under the act can enter upon land at any reasonable time without a warrant or for the purpose of inspecting a building to determine whether it is unsafe. The bill clarifies that a building is unsafe if an inspector determines that it contains a clandestine drug operation. Upon finding that a building contains a clandestine drug operation, an inspector is required to make an order setting out the remedial steps necessary to render the building safe and to register the order against the title to the land on which the building is located. When the order has been carried out, an inspector is required to register a discharge of the order against the title of the land.

The bill amends the Municipal Act, 2001, to broaden the obligation of a local municipality or an upper-tier municipality to conduct an inspection of a building located on land in its jurisdiction when notified by a police force or a local municipality, respectively. At present, the inspection is designed to determine whether there is a marijuana grow-op in the building. Under the amendment, the inspection is designed to determine whether there is a clandestine drug operation in the building.

The bill makes an equivalent amendment to the City of Toronto Act, 2006. The bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, to allow a landlord, on giving at least 24 hours' notice, to enter a rental unit to determine if it contains a clandestine drug operation.

Speaker, this is about the health and the safety of young children in those communities. It is also important that we have consumer protection in our province. I appreciate the opportunity to deliver this bill.

SKIN CANCER PREVENTION ACT (TANNING BEDS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PRÉVENTION DU CANCER DE LA PEAU (LITS DE BRONZAGE)

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to regulate the selling and marketing of tanning services and ultraviolet light treatments / Projet de loi 30, Loi visant à réglementer la vente et la commercialisation de services de bronzage et de traitements par rayonnement ultraviolet.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will make my statement during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

INDOOR TANNING EQUIPMENT

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I rise in the Legislature today to introduce legislation that, if passed, would protect Ontario's young people from the harmful effects of ultraviolet radiation by prohibiting the use of tanning beds for youth under age 18.

I would like to begin by acknowledging that this proposed legislation is highly consistent with private member's Bill 74, An Act to help prevent skin cancer, 2012, which was introduced by MPP France Gélinas in the last legislative session.

I would like to sincerely thank MPP Gélinas for the tremendous work she has done to move this policy forward and for her dedication to protecting Ontario's youth against the many harms associated with tanning beds.

I would also like to thank MPP Margaret Best and former MPP Khalil Ramal for their past efforts to restrict tanning for youth in Ontario.

There are others with us who got us to where we are today. Susan Cox is sitting in the gallery. She's a courageous Ontarian. She has shared her powerful story this morning about her experience living with melanoma. We are very, very happy you are with us today. Thank you, and welcome.

I would like to thank Annette Cyr. She is the chair of the board of the Melanoma Network of Canada. I want to thank her and all of her associates for the work they've done to advocate for women living with melanoma across Canada.

We're also joined today by several representatives from the Canadian Cancer Society. Some of them with us today are Joanne Di Nardo and Rowena Pinto; there are others, I know.

I also want to acknowledge the courage of Kate Neale, another melanoma survivor who has worked very hard to bring this issue to the forefront.

I would also like to say thank you to people in my ministry who worked very hard to bring this legislation forward. Some of them, I believe, are joining us today.

This proposed legislation represents common ground between all of us in this House. I know we all want to protect our youngest Ontarians and keep them healthy. There is clear and compelling evidence to indicate that we must take action, and we must take it now.

The dangers associated with exposure to artificial ultraviolet radiation at a young age have been well documented. It can cause malignant melanoma, a deadly form of cancer, later in life. In fact, tanning bed use increases the risk of malignant melanoma by 17%. More import-

antly, that risk increases to 75% if tanning bed use begins before age 35.

And yet, despite the risks, despite the warnings, tanning bed use among youth is increasing. Between 2006 and 2012, tanning bed use more than doubled among grade 11 and 12 students, from 7% to 16%.

I know we can all attest to the fact that cancer in any form can take a terrible toll on individuals and families. By passing this legislation, Ontario will join six other Canadian provinces and several international jurisdictions that have already decided to take action on youth indoor tanning.

The legislation also responds to the call of many organizations in the health community that have advocated for a ban on youth indoor tanning, including the Canadian Cancer Society, the Ontario Medical Association, the Canadian Dermatology Association and many others.

Further, this legislation aligns with our goal to keep Ontario healthy as part of our action plan for health care. As I mentioned, the proposed legislation will do much of what was proposed in earlier legislation tabled by MPP Gélinas, and I would like to highlight some of the action this legislation would take.

First, it would establish a ban on the sale of tanning services to youth under the age of 18 and require tanning bed operators to request identification from anyone who appears to be less than 25 years of age.

It does include a provision for medical exemptions. We would consult with health care specialists and providers to determine if a medical exemption is necessary and advisable and the form it would take.

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Second, the legislation would require that salon operators post signs noting the prohibition on tanning for those under 18 and the health risks of using tanning equipment for people at any age.

Third, the legislation would prohibit the advertising or marketing of tanning services to youth under the age of 18.

Fourth, it would permit the appointment of inspectors to support compliance. Operators would be required to inform their local public health unit of their business contact information to facilitate inspections.

Finally, the proposed legislation would provide for offences consistent with those in the Health Protection and Promotion Act. Specifically, operators would be subject to a maximum fine of \$5,000 for individuals and \$25,000 for corporations for every day or part of a day in which they fail to comply with the proposed legislation.

Speaker, I believe these measures are strict enough to ensure compliance with the proposed legislation, but I would also like to assure members that we will work with all stakeholders on implementation. This includes developing guidelines on advertising and marketing which will be prescribed by regulation.

I'm confident this proposed legislation responds to the evidence before us, and I am very hopeful that we can take action together to protect our youngest Ontarians

from the risk of cancer. I am asking that all members support this very important and life-saving piece of legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to comment on the government's legislation on tanning beds. I would also like to acknowledge the significant efforts made by the member for Nickel Belt in introducing this bill last year and for her continued advocacy on this point.

I would like to say that I can't really comment specifically on the legislation today, because it has only just become available to us now. So my comments will be somewhat general, and I will comment in just a moment.

I would like to say that this is an important piece of legislation, but there's also other important legislation that has not yet been introduced by this government, and that's legislation to deal with the pressing jobs and economic crisis that this province is in right now. We need to make sure that we deal with this in a timely manner. We're looking forward to the government bringing forward legislation that's going to get the 600,000 unemployed people in this province back to work.

I do want to say specifically with respect to this legislation that I am concerned about evidence that using tanning beds does present considerable increased risk to young people versus adults. Specifically, we're worried about warnings from organizations like the World Health Organization, which has said, "The consequences of regular sunbed use may include disfigurement from removal of skin cancers, early death if the cancer is a malignant melanoma...."

In addition, studies show that childhood exposure to ultraviolet rays from sunbeds increases the risk of developing melanoma later in life. In fact, studies show that young people who regularly use tanning beds are eight times more likely to get melanoma than people who have never used tanning beds. So we are particularly concerned about the use of tanning beds among youth.

In addition, the World Health Organization report notes that the use of tanning beds creates "substantial costs to national health systems for screening, treating and monitoring skin" conditions. So there's certainly an important fiscal component to this argument as well.

We strongly believe in the importance of keeping our youth healthy and educating them and encouraging them to make good decisions.

I would like to acknowledge the significant work and advocacy that has also been done by the Canadian Cancer Society and the representatives who are here today. We thank you very much for your important work in this area.

This is something that we do take very seriously, Mr. Speaker. We look forward to having the opportunity to review the legislation in greater detail and to have further discussions going forward.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I am so happy to be standing here today for the first reading of the Skin Cancer Pre-

vention Act. I must say that this is the lucky fourth time. I first introduced this bill in 2008, I did a co-sponsor of the bill in 2010, and I reintroduced it by myself in 2012. I was about to reintroduce it for a fourth time as a private member's bill when I saw that MPP McGuinty's name had been drawn as the first name on the ballot for private members' bills. So I gave him a call and I asked—I knew that he had supported the bill in the past, because when he was Premier, he had told me that he would support it. So I called him and said, "Are you interested in using your private member's slot for a co-sponsored bill?" His office looked quite interested.

But soon I got an even better offer. The minister came to see me and offered to move the bill through the House, under her leadership. That was an offer that I couldn't refuse. I felt like I had a little bit of leverage—that doesn't happen very often, but I did in this particular circumstance—and asked for a timeline, like, how quick? She said, "Soon." I said, "How soon?" She said, "Very soon." Then I said, "What does 'soon' mean?" After we went back and forth on this, I felt quite confident that she would use the fact that they control the legislative calendar and such to move this faster. So I was really happy that the government decided to move the bill forward and finally it would come.

Looking back, of course I would have loved for the bill to have come into effect in 2008. There have been five years of young girls who, eight, 10, 12 years from now will be at their physician and will be diagnosed with skin cancer, some of them melanoma, which is a cancer that is really tough to treat and often fatal. I can't change the past, but I can certainly influence the future. This bill is here now and I'm really happy about it.

In the five-year span that went by, a lot of work was done. Of course, I want to call upon the Canadian Cancer Society, who were the biggest champions. Florentina Stancu-Soare is here today. Joanne Di Nardo is here today. Rowena Pinto is here today. Nicole McInerney is here today. Certainly, Kate Neale had done a ton of work with us. Unfortunately, she can't be with us because she's fighting cancer right now. All of our best thoughts are with her. We do have Susan Cox, who also has done a ton of work.

During that five-year period, the health units were very helpful. I want to specifically thank Simcoe, Muskoka, Timiskaming and Sudbury district health units. They put together youth groups. Their youth put together a postcard campaign—I'm not supposed to show it—and they went through their peers, and we received thousands and thousands. But what they were really doing—sure, I presented the petition—they were educating their peers. The association of medical students did the same. They went through all of their peers at the university level, asked them to sign postcards, to sign petitions, which I presented in the House, and they were also educating their peers.

If you go on my Facebook page, on the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, you will see that I have thousands and thousands of likes from people who want to give their support to this good cause.

Of course, the Ontario Public Health Association was there; alpha, through their executive director Mrs. Linda Stewart, helped out; the Ontario Board of Health; Marie Adèle Davis, who is the executive director of the Canadian Paediatric Society, was also very helpful throughout this process. We have Martin Kabat, CEO of the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario division; Annette Cyr, who was mentioned by the minister, as chair of the Melanoma Network; Denise Wexler, who was president of the Canadian Dermatology Association; Leona Yez, who is the executive director of the Canadian Skin Cancer Foundation; Dr. Hirotako Yamashiro, chair of the pediatric section of the Ontario Medical Association; and Dr. Samir Gupta, who is the chair of the section on dermatology of the Ontario Medical Association.

Many, many thanks to all of those people. It's finally coming forward, and we're scheduled to start second reading on Tuesday, one week from now.

Thank you, minister. Thank you.

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PETITIONS

ELECTRICITY GENERATION

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of an advocate who works at Queen's Park here very strongly, Jeff Mole. The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas on March 22, 2012, the Ontario government completed a review of the feed-in tariff (FIT) renewable energy procurement program;

"Whereas the government stated 'Active participation of communities is important to the continued success of the FIT program' and the government acknowledged 'most local community and aboriginal projects require more time to mobilize';"—an important observation—

"Whereas active participation can be achieved by mobilizing 'community enterprises' to assess local energy generation opportunities and this development model provides a very high ROI for Ontarians by making certain that surplus revenues are reinvested for the betterment of communities;

"Whereas a community energy act is necessary to overcome the hurdles to mobilization of community enterprises for electricity generation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario consider the need for a community energy act to help facilitate the mobilization of communities and financial resources for the purpose of developing community enterprises for electricity generation."

I'm very pleased to support this. This was presented by Jean-Maurice Cormier and Valerie Binnie, both of whom are from my riding. These signatures were collect-

ed at the recent Liberal leadership convention. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

INDOOR TANNING EQUIPMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a postcard petition that comes from the youth in Nickel Belt. It was collected by the Sudbury and District Health Unit. It reads as follows:

"I support the Canadian Cancer Society's call to action for the government of Ontario to ban the use of artificial tanning equipment by youth under the age of 18, prohibit the marketing of artificial tanning targeting youth, develop and maintain a registry of artificial tanning equipment in Ontario, ensure all staff operating artificial tanning equipment are trained on operation procedures, maintenance and how to identify people at greater risk of developing cancer, particularly those with type 1,"—that's fair skin—"and require that signage be placed in clear view of each bed clearly outlining the health risks of artificial tanning."

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation that bans the use of artificial tanning equipment by youth under the age of 18. I fully support this petition, Mr. Speaker, will affix my name to it and ask my good page John to bring it to the table.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, as you will know, I've introduced a number of people over the past few days who have been here at Queen's Park in recognition of this petition. They got all these names from the community, and on their behalf, I'd officially like to read it into the record. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and the quality of life for all future generations;

"Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which will have significant human and financial costs for;

"Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

"Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

"Whereas the county of Oxford has passed a resolution requesting a moratorium on landfill construction or approval;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To implement a moratorium in Oxford county on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

"That this review of alternatives would give special emphasis on (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can efficiently and practically be recycled or reused so as not to require disposal in landfills."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present this petition on behalf of my community. I will affix my signature to it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Before I go to further petitions, I will remind all members that the Speaker reminded us yesterday to try and stick to the petition and not the comments in a preamble.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Re: Dr. Kevin Smith's Niagara Health System report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care proposed changes to the hospital services in south Niagara.

"Whereas the residents of south Niagara will not have equal, fair, safe and timely access to in-patient gynecological, obstetrical and pediatric services due to distance; and

"Whereas excessive travel times and lack of public transportation for residents in south Niagara will put patient safety at risk; and

"Whereas, if implemented, Dr. Smith's recommendations and the proposed location of a new south Niagara hospital in Niagara Falls is approved, a two-tier health system in Niagara will be created, where north Niagara will be overserved and south Niagara will be underserved in relation to the safe and timely access to health and hospital care; and

"Whereas, if hospital services including in-patient gynecological and mental health, and all obstetrical and pediatric services from the Welland hospital site and the Greater Niagara hospital site will be relocated to the new north Niagara St. Catharines site in 2013, it will undermine the continued viability of these two sites as full-service hospital sites;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to maintain existing services at the Welland hospital site and the Niagara Falls hospital site and that no services are to be moved until this new south Niagara hospital is open and request that any approval for a new Niagara south hospital include a site that is centrally located in Welland."

I sign my signature to the petition and I give this to page Jenna to deliver to the table.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors for more than 80 municipalities and Ontario's largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario seek an immediate moratorium on new wind development until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

"Whereas the provincial Liberal government study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than that it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

"Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of health impacts of wind turbines;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished, it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately."

I support this petition, will affix my name and send it with Joshua as perhaps his last task.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: We're changing pages. Oh, that's why. Well, that could also be Lauren's last duty. Here I go.

"Whereas the Ontario government" has made PET scanning "a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with" Health Sciences North, "its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available" through Health Sciences North, "thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Lauren to bring it to the table.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: This may sound a little repetitious.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors for more than 80 municipalities and Ontario's largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario seek an immediate moratorium on new wind development until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

"Whereas the provincial Liberal government study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than that it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

"Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of health impacts of wind turbines;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished, it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately."

I support this petition, will sign my name and send it with page Stacey.

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LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system;

"Therefore we ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask A.J. to bring it to the Clerk.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors from more than 80 municipalities and Ontario's largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, seek an immediate moratorium on new wind development until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

"Whereas the provincial Liberal government's study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than that it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

"Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of health impacts of wind turbines;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately."

I support this, will affix my signature and send it with page Jaden.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai cette pétition qui vient de partout en Ontario :

« Attendu que la mission du commissaire aux services en français est de veiller à ce que la population reçoive, en français, des services de qualité du gouvernement de l'Ontario et de surveiller l'application de la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que le commissaire a le mandat de mener des enquêtes indépendantes selon la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que contrairement au vérificateur général, à l'ombudsman, au commissaire à l'environnement et au commissaire à l'intégrité qui, eux, relèvent de l'Assemblée législative, le commissaire aux services en français relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français;

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative « de changer les pouvoirs du commissaire aux services en français afin qu'il relève directement de l'Assemblée législative. »

J'appuie cette pétition, j'y appose ma signature et je demande à page Daniel de l'amener à la table.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas beginning 1 January 2013 WSIB was expanded to include groups of employers and principals who had previously been exempt from WSIB and had private insurance; and

"Whereas this new financial burden does nothing to improve worker safety and only drives up the cost of doing business in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119."

I agree with this petition. I'm pleased to sign it and pass it to my page Luisa, who is here on her last day in the House.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: "Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Olivia to bring it to the Clerk.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

GASOLINE TAX FAIRNESS FOR ALL ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ POUR TOUS À L'ÉGARD DE LA TAXE SUR L'ESSENCE

Mr. Yakabuski moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 3, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to matching rebates of gasoline tax that the Minister provides to municipalities / *Projet de loi 3, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun à l'égard des remboursements de la taxe sur l'essence similaires consentis aux municipalités par le ministre.*

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I at least recognize you first? I have to follow procedures too. I know you're excited.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Nervous; nervous. It's my first time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I forgot about the procedure because I was so excited, because I have never been more confident that the people on the opposite side of this aisle might support this bill. I want to point out, for those that are not aware, that it is not the first time I have presented this bill, or one somewhat like it.

Interjection: How many times?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't actually know how many times. You stop counting after a certain length of time. But I do believe that there's no record of the first time, because the first time that I introduced this bill I don't think they had introduced recording devices to this

chamber yet. So it has been going on a long time. But as I said then and said each subsequent time that I put forward the bill for second reading and will say again: This is something that obviously I believe in very strongly as an issue of fundamental fairness for people who live in rural Ontario.

Time and time again, I have pointed out to the Liberal government that they cannot simply take rural Ontario for granted, treat them differently and to a lesser degree than they do people in urban Ontario. We understand that this is not a battle between urban and rural Ontario; this is an issue of fairness. We recognize that Ontario cannot be strong if urban Ontario is weak. But by the very same token, Ontario cannot be strong if rural Ontario is weak. Without a strong rural Ontario, we cannot have a strong Ontario. Without a strong northern Ontario, we cannot have a strong Ontario. We must work co-operatively and together for the good of us all and the betterment of all.

One thing that has continuously been put forward to me by municipal councillors, by people who live in rural Ontario: They pay a disproportionate share of gasoline tax; why in God's name can they not get a fair share of it back? My bill would compel the Minister of Transportation that, where they enter into an agreement with a municipality to provide a portion of the provincial gas tax or to a municipality that has a public transportation system, they could not refuse to enter into an agreement with a municipality that does not have a public transportation system. That is the simple part of the bill. So it would then treat everyone exactly the same, based on a formula that is followed by the federal government.

I could point out—and most people know—that the federal government has been sharing gas tax with all municipalities for several years now. It is the right thing to do. It has been pointed out as a priority of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, of which my county is part. My warden, Peter Emon, is a member of that caucus. I go back to when Bob Sweet was the warden of Renfrew county for the first time. He came down to this chamber to support me the first time I introduced this gas-tax bill.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Is he still the warden?

Mr. John Yakabuski: He is not the warden now, but he has been the warden on three different occasions.

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Speaker, it is a priority of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus. It's a fundamental issue that they have put forward as one that they expect the provincial government will heed—and give them a share of that tax. The provincial tax is 14.7 cents on every litre of gas—and then, of course, the provincial share of the HST.

It was pointed out to me by a member of the other party that, "You know, we might like that bill if it didn't say anything about kilometres." Well, the whole point of it is about kilometres. If you don't drive, then what does it matter? You don't pay gas tax. If you sit in one spot, you will not pay any gas tax. But in rural Ontario, you can't get anywhere, you can't do anything, you can't accomplish anything, you can't go to work, you can't go get a quart of milk unless you're, usually, prepared to get

into a vehicle and drive somewhere—unless you happen to live next door to the food store within the town. We drive kilometres. Gas tax is derived from the use of gasoline. If you're sitting in one spot, you're not using it. Their argument doesn't make any sense. Kilometres are what is important. If you have a million people sitting in one spot, they're not going to pay any gas tax. But if you have 10,000 people spread out over several hundred kilometres, they're going to generate gas tax, and what my people want is some of that gas tax back.

Speaker, think about this: A family in rural Ontario, incomes are lower there, both parents have to work—but what are the odds that both parents are going to work in the same place at the same time, on the same shift, all the time? They're not good. The likelihood is that they have to work two different jobs. So if one has to go here to work, they're driving; and if one has to go somewhere else to work, they're driving. An unbelievable portion of people's income in rural Ontario goes to buying gasoline for their vehicles, and the price of gas today—is anybody happy about that? It's absolutely ridiculous.

As the gas prices go up, this government—hey, they were pretty cagey. They were always getting that 14.7 cents on each litre, but now they've put the HST on it. So as that price goes up, so does the tax—more money for the Liberals taken out of rural Ontario; no money going back to rural Ontario, even though it keeps getting bigger.

Oh, and I know they're going to have their arguments about, there are different kinds of funding—

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes, there are.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You want to talk about something that is fair? Are you going to charge different levels of income tax to people in different areas of the province? I say to my friend from Mississauga, is that what you want to do?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: No.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, that would be wrong. It would be wrong to charge different levels of taxation to people who live in different parts of the province. It would be wrong. Then why is it not wrong not to share some of that revenue that you collect from those very people?

I put it to all these folks who live in the city of Toronto here—I'd like you to tell me how much money you spend a year on gasoline. I'd like you to tell me how much you spend on gasoline and I'll compare that to the folks who live up in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, or live in Haldimand–Norfolk, or live in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brook, or Leeds–Grenville, or Caledon, or Durham, or York–Simcoe, or Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. You want to talk about how much it costs to live up there and how much you spend on gas?

Let's get down to the meat of the matter here. Before I run out of time, let's start talking about Liberal promises and the value that they have. Maybe they should tax Liberal promises, because the tax would be zero, because when something has no value, you can't tax it.

Oh, there's the Minister of Transportation, who was running for the Liberal leadership, and he promised new respect for rural Ontario. He said, "We're going to start listening to rural Ontario."

The Premier promised new respect for rural Ontarians. She was going to look at things differently.

The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment says, "Not only will we respect rural Ontario more"—it's funny what they say when they're looking for votes, eh, Speaker?—"we're actually going to share the gas tax with people from rural Ontario municipalities so they can plan their infrastructure in a more coordinated way so they have sustainable, annual, dependable funding that they know they can build into their long-term transportation plans." That came from the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

As I said to the Premier earlier today, this is the day, Speaker, that the rubber meets the road. We're going to find out if what the Liberals said during that leadership convention had a shred of truth to it. This is their opportunity.

But it gets better, Speaker. The Minister of Rural Affairs, the member from Peterborough, Mr. Leal, visited the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus in January. He stood in there and he said, "We're going to share the gas tax with you."

Mr. Bill Walker: How will he vote today?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I want to know how Mr. Leal is going to vote. I want to know how Mr. Hoskins is going to vote. I want to know how Mr. Murray is going to vote. I know he dropped out of the contest, but his words are still his words. I want to know how the Premier is going to vote. Are they going to vote to respect rural Ontario, or is it just going to be the same old same old?

As I said, Mr. Speaker, this is a fundamental issue of fairness. There are only 81 municipalities in Ontario out of 440 or so that actually get a gas tax to run public transportation systems. It's time to show some respect to those other municipalities.

As my friend from Burlington pointed out, as more and more people populate the urban areas and less the rural areas, the divide is going to get greater. So how are we going to support that portion of the population? How are they going to maintain those roads? That is the public transportation system of rural Ontario. There is never going to be a subway going to Renfrew. There will never be a bus picking you up in Palmer Rapids. It's not going to happen.

So why don't we, after 10 years of absolutely ignoring the needs of people in rural Ontario and voting time and time again against them—because this government has shown over that time that it doesn't really care about rural people. It cares about one thing: Hanging on to power, and the truth be darned. You'll have an opportunity later today.

Yes, if it looks like I'm frustrated, I am, because I've been up in this House many times asking for some—

some—evidence that you care about rural Ontario. Today, you can stand in your place and say—I will not accept that all of a sudden you've turned 180 degrees, but it would be one heck of a first step in showing that you've started to learn what matters in rural Ontario and what you can do to help.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I agree with the point that was raised by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke that this is a matter of fairness. It really is. No matter where we live in the province, it's true that whenever we fill up our tanks with gas, we are all paying the gas tax that is levied by the provincial government, yet not all municipalities are eligible to receive the tax. It is an unfair system because all municipalities face challenges, but yet again not all municipalities receive a portion of the levied tax. This is because not all municipalities have public transit, and this is a stipulated requirement, that municipalities have to provide public transit in order to be eligible to receive a portion of the provincial tax levy.

In my experience, it's not because the municipalities don't want to provide public transportation; it's simply because not all municipalities can afford to provide it. Many are struggling just to keep afloat and pay their minimal obligations.

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Yesterday in Queen's Park in question period, I raised the issue of the MPAC assessment that the city of Dryden is struggling with. They were recently hit with a 72% reduction in the assessed value of their largest taxpayer, Domtar. Now they're required to pay back over 20% of their annual operating budget to cover the drop in assessment. All the while, they're struggling to pay for the very expensive services that were downloaded by the Mike Harris government in the late 1990s—things like housing, child care, ambulance services—and they're still required to at least partially finance public infrastructure such as the Trans-Canada Highway, which crosses through the community, at a substantial cost to their bottom line.

While Dryden does receive some gas tax money, it doesn't come close to addressing the financial challenges they have. So the question is: Are any municipalities less deserving than a community that can already afford to provide public transportation? The answer is no. But is it fair to the other communities that currently provide public transportation to further split the already small and underfunded pot of money they receive from the provincial gas tax? I would contend that that's not fair either.

Other communities, like Kenora, another community in my riding, which along with Dryden are able to provide limited public transportation, are struggling as well. They're not immune from the downloading of services that occurred under the Mike Harris government. And in addition to funding the public transit, housing, child care and ambulance services that Dryden has to

pay, they too have their own set of public infrastructure challenges. In fact, they have over \$100 million worth of roads, bridges and culverts alone that they have to pay for. Will reducing the amount of money they get from the gas tax, as proposed in this bill, help them? The answer, again, is no, it won't. It will only serve to penalize them.

The solution is to create a dedicated infrastructure fund, like the one we proposed in the last election, which would see \$70 million a year put toward roads and bridges alone, in addition to returning to the 50/50 provincial/municipal split of the transit operating subsidy, because nobody wins when we pit communities against one another. Really, that's what this bill is doing. What we have right now is not fair. But what this bill is proposing, as earnest as it really is, doesn't really solve the problem either, because there is chronic underfunding across the board.

To be clear, I will be supporting this bill, because I believe it does need to be sent to committee because it raises some very valid and serious concerns that are experienced across the province, not just in rural Ontario but in northern Ontario as well. I want to continue to pressure the government to do the right thing and create a dedicated and adequately funded program to address the critical issue of public infrastructure maintenance, both in municipalities and in unincorporated areas as well, which is also not covered by this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: A pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 3, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to matching rebates of gasoline tax that the Minister provides to municipalities, put forward by my colleague. I commend the member for bringing it forward; I think it's excellent politics. What I don't think it is, though, is excellent public policy, and that's why I think it needs much further examination than the member perhaps gave in his 12 minutes.

I think the proof is in the pudding. I think our government, certainly over the 10 or 11 years I've been here, has a record of investing in transportation throughout the province of Ontario. Certainly, my community of Oakville has seen some massive investments in the QEW and in its transit system. While obviously not all municipalities in the province of Ontario have a public transit system, the government is still committed to helping those municipalities maintain the road and bridge infrastructure that needs to be maintained.

It's interesting to note, just take eastern Ontario, for example, how the municipalities came to be responsible for looking after the roads in the numbers that they do. Our research has found that 42% of the roads that are being looked after in eastern Ontario were actually downloaded to the municipalities by the Harris government in the first place. Certainly, that has exacerbated the problem we're dealing with today. But municipalities that don't qualify for the gas tax program are continuously eligible for funding programs through various ministries in the province of Ontario.

Since 2003, we've provided a number of funding opportunities and funds to support road and bridge projects right throughout the province of Ontario.

In 2008, we announced \$1.1 billion in the Investing in Ontario Act, and that can be used for roads, bridges, transit and other projects. The MIII funding: \$450 million to support municipal infrastructure priorities such as roads and bridges in communities across Ontario, but surprisingly, I couldn't—in Oakville, my community cannot qualify for that fund.

The \$400-million road and bridge fund was announced in the 2008 budget. The Infrastructure Ontario loan program provides long-term loans for really critical infrastructure projects at very low rates. It also allows municipalities to do priority road and bridge repairs and to amortize the cost of that over the life of the asset that's being repaired.

What this bill appears to me to do—I said it's good politics because it points out an issue that we certainly need to address: how public infrastructure is funded in the province of Ontario and how it's funded especially when it comes to roads and bridges in rural Ontario. I don't think anyone denies that that is something that needs to be done. What I have an objection to is the methodology that's being proposed by the member here today. I come from a community that does have a public transit system, and it would lose money under this bill. Money would be taken out of my community as a result of the passage of this bill. I'm pretty sure the mayor of Oakville would not want me to support this bill.

Who else might lose money under this bill? What I can get is York region. Owen Sound would lose money under this bill. Sarnia would lose money under this bill. Guelph, London, Kingston, Fort Erie, Brampton, Milton, Cornwall, St. Catharines, Burlington, Barrie and Brantford: All those transit systems would lose money under this bill.

It seems to me that we need to address the issue, and that is that rural Ontario is asking for increased infrastructure funding to maintain the public infrastructure that it has. I don't think there's any argument from this side of the House that that is something that perhaps we should be looking at in a more comprehensive way, but I think that tinkering with an existing method of funding public transit in the province of Ontario is not the way to do it. I think we can do much better than that.

We can go back to the days—if you want to assign blame around the House, and certainly the speaker who spoke to us today assigned enough blame to this side of the House. What he left out, though, is that the Tory government cut capital transit funding to 0%.

Interjection: Zero.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: To zero. All the transit authorities that are in all of your communities, including those of Sarnia, Guelph, Fort Erie, Brampton, Cornwall, St. Catharines, Barrie, Brantford: All had their transit funding cut by that party to zero. So when it came time to buy new buses, to build new bus depots, bus shelters, anything involved with the running of a public transit

system, that party decided that municipalities would get absolutely no help at all, and yet they're now standing up and lecturing us on what we should do with that public transit fund in the first place. That, to me, seems a little bit of doublespeak, and I don't think it's appropriate for this House. We didn't see any action at all on designated rapid transit rail lines in the eight years that they formed the government, so I don't think we need to take any lessons.

Certainly in Oakville, we've been playing catch-up ever since. After years of neglect, though, we've witnessed quite a lot of progress in my own community of Oakville. There are new lanes on the QEW; we've got a third lane on the GO track now that's running into my community. We've expanded the GO parking lots that they couldn't. The GO trains now are longer, cleaner and more frequent. We've invested millions of dollars into local transit systems through the gas tax. It's a program that is working for urban municipalities and for rural communities that have public transit.

I suggest that we maintain a focus on the problem that urban and rural infrastructure needs to be funded, but simply tinkering with a program that's working seems to me very short-sighted.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Bill 3, with respect to gas tax fairness, is very important, certainly outside of the cities. So many people in my riding drive pickup trucks, they have to commute to work in cities outside of the area, and as a result, we pay an awful lot of money to government in the form of gas taxes.

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Northern Ontario, most of rural Ontario—you really can't go anywhere without getting into a vehicle. Every time we fill up the tank, we're paying these provincial taxes, as we recognize a portion of which goes to support public transit.

Many will know there's no public transit in Haldimand county. Very recently there's a minibus experiment in Norfolk county, but as far as ridership, public transit hasn't existed in my riding for several decades.

All municipalities should receive a share in the portion of the gas tax they pay by making all municipalities eligible to receive a rebate from the provincial government, not just the urban municipalities with public transit systems. We're just asking to bring some fairness into this system. The gas tax rebate could be allocated to those municipalities without public transportation systems based on population size, based on length of the roads in their jurisdictions.

Everybody who pays gas tax in this province has a right to get some benefit from it. In rural Ontario, our bridges, our roads, our streets: That is our public transportation system. In fairness, we need to get some of this tax back to support this kind of an infrastructure.

When it comes to paying for gas, none of us are immune to the roller coaster of market-driven price hikes, which makes it all the more frustrating when this

government brought in the HST on gasoline, which in that case essentially becomes a tax on a tax.

We see this in rural Ontario, adding insult to injury, that when it comes to the redistribution of gas tax, we all pay. While cities get in line for the rebates, rural municipalities without transit can't even join the lineup.

Our member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has reported on his previous attempts to institute some fairness. The federal government has seen the light when it comes to gas tax fairness. They've made it permanent that all communities in this province will get a share of the federal gas tax that they pay every time they fill up their tanks.

I've have raised this issue a number of times. Back in April 2009, the government made an announcement of \$9 billion for transit in the GTA. I had an opportunity to ask the minister of the day when rural residents would expect to hear some news like that, something with respect to their very own public transit funding. We're still waiting for certainly an announcement of that magnitude. I did remind the minister at the time that we pay the 14.7 cents a litre tax like everybody else, plus HST, as I mentioned. We're well aware of the unfairness of a program that only shares funding with municipalities that are already benefitting from public transit.

We remember that gas tax. I asked the minister not to rub it in. He made it very clear: Some ridings benefit from this; others do not. As I've indicated, my riding gets nothing from the gas tax. For that reason, I ask everyone present to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to say that we, as New Democrats, don't have a huge problem with this bill. I think the first thing is that we should get it to committee because there are some issues from other communities, as they see this bill, that I think are legitimate and that need to be dealt with. This is obviously an issue that's big for northern Ontario, big for rural Ontario. There are a lot of communities out there that don't get a share of the gas tax and, as a result, they are having a harder time trying to maintain roads and bridges.

I'll give you a little story. Iroquois Falls, in the riding of my good friend John Vanthof: They're at a point where they're going to have to shut down a bridge between Matheson and Iroquois Falls because they don't have money to fix it, and there are no provincial dollars to be able to assist them to replace it. Here's a road that's been used for years and years and years, where people are going to have to detour around Highway 11 to get there. I guess they'll get there eventually, but the point is, it's a real—

Mr. John Yakubuski: More gas to get there.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: More gas, but it's really, really frustrating for small communities, such as Matheson, such as Iroquois Falls and others to be able to deal with that and not have money. So there is a legitimate issue that the member raises in regard to how we utilize tax dollars in this province when it comes to assisting our small communities to maintain infrastructure.

The member has an idea. He's saying we should allow them to keep a share of the gas tax, and we'll support him, generally, on that idea. We think it's not a bad idea, but I think we need to look at some issues, because some of the larger communities worry that that may mean less money for them. I think we have to look at that and figure out how we find the mix and how we find the balance. We'll support the bill; we think generally it's the right thing.

The other thing I just want to say is, the real issue here is that we need to find predictable funding for capital for municipalities. That's the issue. Andrea Horwath in the last election actually said that. That's what we ran on. We said, "We need to have predictable, stable funding that you know is multi-year so that communities the size of 1,000 people or a municipality the size of 2.5 million people are able say, 'Okay, we know what our capital is this year. We know what our capital is going to be for a number of years,'" and to have the proper funds there to be able to do that so they can do proper planning. Because part of the problem you've got now is, if I'm the city of Timmins or Opatatika or Hearst or Pembroke or wherever it might be, how do I know how much money I'm going to get from the provincial and federal levels of government when it comes to planning capital in the years to come? You're constantly going, "Oh, there's a pot of money there. Let's go and apply," or "Oh, there's a pot of money over there. Let's go and apply." Municipalities are essentially running—I should say lurching—from pot to pot, pardon the term, to fund their infrastructure. Every municipality in this province, if it be Toronto or Hamilton or Timmins or Opatatika, needs to make sure they have the ability to plan. That's what Andrea Horwath and New Democrats want to see. We need predictable, stable funding to deal with their capital infrastructure plans.

I know I have other colleagues that want to speak to this. I'm just wondering—okay, my whip is saying go, so I'm going to keep on going. You've got to love the whips when they do that for you.

I'm just saying that you need to have that.

The other thing is that, as my good friend Sarah Campbell, the member from Kenora–Rainy River, had raised, we had raised the issue in the last election—that in fact we had put forward a fund that would be able to deal with part of what the member asked about, the \$240 million, I think it was, in order to look at capital for small communities to deal with some of these issues, because clearly there's a need, and we need to find a way to fill the need. It's difficult because every community is different. What works for Timmins may not work for Pembroke, may not work for Toronto, may not work for Hamilton. We need to find something that works for those communities in a way that makes some sense.

I've got to end on this last point in regard to our highways. Wow. Talk about bad highways. My good friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke drives into work every week from far away, as do my good friends John Vanthof and Mr. Mantha and others who drive in

from far away to come in to the city to sit in this Legislature every week. The roads have been closed more times than not than we used to see in the past. Part of the reason for that is a pretty simple one: It used to be that the Ministry of Transportation used to run their own plow system. In other words, they owned 50% of the plows and sanding trucks in this province, and then they used to contract; the private contractors came in and augmented. Also what used to happen is that the standards that the ministry had established that say, "This is a class 1, class 2, class 3 highway and you've got to take the snow off and you've got to make it centre bare or make it essentially asphalt within so many hours or minutes," were set down in standards.

Well, the truth is the ministry of transport never really met those standards. They surpassed them because the ministry of transport would look at the road and say, "God, that's a class 2 highway" or "That's a class 3 highway. If I maintain it to that standard, it's going to be in bad shape, and it'll be dangerous." So the ministry of transport used to take care of the highways in excess of what the standards set out. Plus, they used to do their own patrolling.

This Liberal government—first started by the Conservatives when they downloaded and privatized—first of all, they downloaded to municipalities many of our highways, but then they privatized their winter road maintenance. The Liberals, who were in opposition, have shifted into high gear, and Kathleen Wynne as Minister of Transportation said, "I'm not happy with a little bit of privatization; I want more privatization, and I want bigger privatization." When she was minister of transport, she essentially got rid of the small contractors. Now we've got large-area maintenance contracts that are held by a few companies. Now I'm not going to say that those companies aren't trying hard and they're not trying to do a good job. I think generally that's what they're trying to do. But here's the trick: The government under Kathleen Wynne as minister said, "I'm going to privatize the patrolling of when we dispatch sand, salt and snowplows on highways, and I'll allow the contractors themselves who have those contracts to determine when it is they're going to be doing the plowing and the salting and the sanding." That's like putting—what's the old saying?—the fox in charge of the henhouse.

But here's the bigger problem: We're saying to those contractors, "You must maintain the highway to a standard"—class 1, 2, or 3. Well, the ministry never used to do that. The ministry always maintained it above that standard, and so we are saying it's true when the minister stands up and says, "Our highways are being maintained according to the standards set out in regulation." He's right when he says that. But the problem is we never maintained them to those standards; we always maintained them above those standards. So we're saying to the contractors, "Here's a little bit of money, and you're going to maintain it to the standard we tell you on paper," fully knowing that that standard is lesser than what it was when MTO did it themselves.

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My friend John Vanthof and my good friend Sarah Campbell from Kenora—Rainy River and Mike Mantha have raised this with members, along with France Gélinas, and we're asking the government to relook at that.

We had a meeting this morning with the minister. He seemed a little bit surprised when we raised it with him, but he did acknowledge that this is something new that he's got to look into. So all of us across this province are looking forward to seeing what the minister is going to do when it comes to this issue. At the very least, we should run our own patrol systems and dispatch, and we should relook at those standards so they actually meet the demands of our highways out there.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: Five minutes? Okay. I'll try my best.

I think this is a good debate, because transportation is really critical for everybody in every municipality—small, large—all across Ontario. It's good to have this debate, really, because it is a complex issue, and I think the member is trying to bring forth a legitimate concern that his residents and other people have. I don't admonish him for doing that.

I just want to make sure that we also don't demonize people who live in the cities like he was. I think that's the only thing I totally disagree with—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We never demonized anybody.

Mr. Mike Colle: That was the member from Pembroke—anyways.

The thing is, people who live in Mississauga or Ajax or Markham or Oshawa pay for gas; they pay the gas tax. They pay for transit on their property taxes. They also pay huge insurance for their cars. In terms of travel, although there may be shorter distances, if you're stuck in gridlock—as most people are, from Oakville, Oshawa, every day—you're paying so many more dollars for your gas, and you're wasting your time. As you know, it's about \$6 billion lost, the cost of gridlock. So it's not cheap to live in Toronto.

So you're paying the gas tax, you're paying car insurance, property taxes, all to move around the city. Then what you have to do is you also pay for TTC fare, and it ain't cheap for people. A lot of working people have to use transit. It can cost \$125 a month for a Metropass, three bucks each way on the TTC, and that is very expensive. So municipalities and transit authorities need some help.

The intent of this gas tax is to make sure that municipalities that are trying to provide good transportation have some funding for transportation in their city, because if transit works, other modes of transportation work.

You can't separate Toronto and the north. They manufacture Toronto streetcars and subways in Kenora, so if Toronto is buying streetcars and subway cars, it creates jobs in the north, and has done so since the early 1990s at that great plant in Thunder Bay. So let's not try to pit one

part of Ontario against another. Everybody works hard in this province.

It is not easy living in Toronto or Oshawa or Ajax. Look at the price of a house. People have to live in a 500-square-foot little condo that they're paying half a million bucks for. Then they're paying condo fees on top of that. Then they're paying for the TTC, and some of them, again, have to spend, even though they're in the city—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: I know they don't want to hear the side of hard-working people in our cities, but there are, in fact, many hard-working people in the cities who, at one time, lived in a small town and came to Toronto. We love that. We welcome that. I don't know why they're sort of slugging people who live in cities. It doesn't get you anywhere.

So there's opportunity to look at how we fund transportation, and I think the new Premier is very aggressive in terms of looking at new ways of helping rural municipalities, remote municipalities get the resources they need. That's what we should be talking about, not about saying that people in cities got it easy; people in rural municipalities—everybody has got a tough time getting around. Everybody needs a helping hand. Whether you drive a truck, whether you're on a bicycle, whether you're on transit, whether you're on a slow train to nowhere, everybody needs help. That's what the government has tried to do. I think there's no reason why we can't try to improve this so that people who live in northern municipalities or who live in rural municipalities feel that they're getting a fair shake.

That's where I agree with the member for putting this forward, and I think it's really worth the examination. But, please, as the member from Kenora-Rainy River said, let's not pit one against the other. That achieves nothing. We tried that during the Mike Harris days when he downloaded bridges, highways; zero funding for transit. He created massive chaos. He downloaded everything he could touch onto the local property taxpayers and basically brought transportation to its knees in this province. In fact, somebody mentioned the subway funding. We had started building a subway on Eglinton in 1990. It would have cost \$1 billion then—all the way to the airport, \$1 billion. Mike Harris came along and said, "Oh, we don't need this subway. Cancel it." Now it's going to cost—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: To the member from Durham: \$8 billion. It would have been finished and gone to the airport, but because the Mike Harris people were so far-sighted, they were so interested in transportation, they killed transportation in Ontario and now—be very careful before you pretend to have all the answers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: Bill 3: why rural Ontario can't wait any longer for fair treatment. A little story to illustrate, if I can, Speaker:

In 2004, the newly elected Liberal government, under Premier Dalton McGuinty, quietly adopted a controversial policy paper entitled *Small, Rural, and Remote Communities: the Anatomy of Risk*. While no one in Toronto was paying attention, the folks north of Highway 7 were, and they were and remain worried—very worried. It is important to examine the details of this policy, as its ideas are responsible for imposing some of the most devastating socio-economic conditions on small towns across rural Ontario, including my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, in recent history.

To quote from the Liberal doctrine, "Most communities in the periphery cannot be self-sustaining, economically, socially or fiscally...."

"Hard choices have to be made. The provincial government cannot provide subsidies to everyone everywhere in the province. Nor can all small communities survive, and provide a reasonable minimum level of services and jobs, within a climate of population and economic decline."

The Liberals suddenly deemed us as insignificant, and so it set to pull the plug on rural industries, business and infrastructure, leaving its residents, many of whom are rapidly aging, to fend for themselves.

The report devastated small communities. Nine years later, about 100 municipal delegates walked out on Dalton McGuinty at a municipal rural conference in Toronto. Rural Ontario does not accept that as its fate, one of welfare dependency. The municipal leaders were protesting this government's signature policy: the no fair share for the small guys.

Such was the government's decision to pull the plug on the Slots at Racetracks Program, putting the entire horse racing industry in chaos. The hasty cancellation of the program is putting thousands of people out of work, and this at a time when the economy is very fragile and very scarce.

In my riding, the Hanover Raceway and slots in Hanover, which is owned by the Hanover, Bentinck and Brant Agricultural Society—a not-for-profit organization that employs 180 people and contributes about \$2 million to our regional economies, but they've devastated that.

Municipal leaders were also protesting the government pulling the plug on our young people by forcing our small schools to fit an urban school funding model. This outdated funding formula is threatening to close down hundreds of rural schools across the province and, at the same time, wrecking and destroying the social fabric of our communities.

In the last year alone, the government has actually pulled the plug on the Bluewater Technology Centre and continued its assault on the closure of Owen Sound and Walkerton jails. This latter resulted in the loss of 200 jobs and \$6 million in combined payrolls for Grey and Bruce counties.

The Liberal government also pulled the plug big-time on municipal planning powers when it passed the Green Energy Act. It took away their total power to have a say, and they talked earlier about their subsidies—"can't

subsidize everyone." I wish they would have thought about that with these \$20 billion in subsidies they signed with Samsung.

But perhaps, Speaker—and getting back to the point of this bill—the most persistent anti-rural policy is the gas tax. The story of how this government pulled the plug on rural infrastructure begins in 2003, which is about the time my colleague and MPP for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, John Yakabuski, first introduced the tax fairness bill, the first of many more tax bills to come from Mr. Yakabuski. To think that 10 years on we're still debating this most basic question of fairness is really shameful.

1440

All we're recommending is that taxes paid on gasoline by all Ontario residents be shared by all Ontario residents. The objective of this bill is to ensure that the gas tax revenue is shared with all 440-plus municipalities, not just the urban centres, so they have an equal share of funds to build their highways, roads and bridges. After all, roads and bridges are the only means of transportation in rural and northern Ontario.

I want the members opposite to acknowledge that this issue is about fairness, and I call on every one of them on that side of the House to acknowledge that rural and northern Ontario has had enough of this nonsense, that rural Ontario can't take it anymore. To continue to strip them of their fair share accomplishes nothing, save giving more oxygen to the story of the urban-rural divide.

Vote to pass Bill 3. Stop pulling the plug on rural Ontario, and acknowledge that communities are sustainable if given their fair share.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I am very pleased to stand up and talk about Bill 3. In my role as warden in SDG—Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry—it was a key issue when I was in that chair. I saw the amount of tax we were losing due to the farm tax rebate.

Through my work meeting with ministers, I was signed to the committee for our counties to work with the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus. At that time, the Minister of Municipal Affairs had asked us to wait. They were listening, and through the Who Does What committee, they would be acting on this issue. We had delegations from our county and many of the other counties eastern Ontario.

I remember being there at AMO that year when they came out with the results. Sadly, there was nothing for rural Ontario in the tax plan. His answer was, "We ran out of time. We didn't have time to get to it."

The committee met for about two years longer than it was supposed to, and there was no time for rural Ontario. So I think it just shows how this government treats rural Ontario. We're not looking for anything more than our fair share. Right now we get nothing. We here in our party included in the last campaign a form of gas tax that addressed some of the issues of rural Ontario, because, as the mayor of South Glengarry, we receive less money

today than we did in 1999. I think it would be fair to say that costs have gone up drastically since 1999.

When you look at the TTC, I think our honourable member from Renfrew mentioned that they receive \$1 billion a year from this government. So these are funds that go to the larger municipalities, but sadly, when you come back to rural Ontario, there's nothing.

I look at this Premier that, over the past through to her latest leadership campaign—she promised to address this. Numerous times in the past—I think it was mentioned seven times—she voted on this bill that my honourable member from Renfrew put through.

At the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, I had the opportunity to work with Bob Sweet, who was a warden from Renfrew county at the time as I. He was a great guy to work with. This was a key issue amongst ourselves. We promoted some of the issues that were affecting us in rural Ontario and why we were being unfairly treated in many respects. I was very pleased to work with him and very pleased to see the feds listening to our discussions and then coming out with a form of gas tax that really helped us in rural Ontario.

But you know, we fought for predictable funding, because that's one thing we don't have today. We really receive nothing. When you take into consideration the farm tax rebate, we actually get no funding from the provincial government. We are a creature of the provincial government. So much depends on the relationship.

It's interesting to note, in talking to the now mayor of South Glengarry: When they applied for the MIII funding, they were told that they weren't allowed to apply even because they were in too good of financial shape. This is an issue of not being a—rich man's value. We've raised our taxes so that we have a modest reserve. It allows us not to have to go and borrow money every year. This is the message back from this government: "If you have put yourself into severe debt so that you can't afford to do anything, well then, we may be there." The answer is "We may be there," because you do have to compete for this money. This was over a bridge that has been condemned and allowed to operate for another year, a \$2.5-million bridge now put back to the people.

So it's interesting to see. I thought I would hear the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell talking about this bill. Around the county table, he really spoke in favour of the gas tax, but sadly I don't see him here. In fact, in the past, he has voted against it—as the Premier did. I think it's time that we speak up for rural Ontario and we have some action.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Before I begin, I do want to recognize my friend Rick Lemenchick, who—okay, he didn't stay for the rest of the debate. He was sitting there watching the debate. He must have thought I was done. Anyway, Rick was here earlier from Ottawa to watch the debate.

I want to thank all the members on all of the parties for offering their views. I particularly want to thank my

colleagues from Haldimand–Norfolk, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for their support, and also my colleagues from the New Democratic Party for offering their support for the bill as well. I didn't hear support from the Liberal Party; I guess nothing has changed.

But I do want to challenge the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, who characterized this as a demonization of people from Toronto. I might want to point out to him that I have three brothers and a sister and their families who live in the GTA. It's not like I have never been out of the hayfields of eastern Ontario. I'm quite confident I have a lot better understanding of the city of Toronto than those folks have of my riding and the rest of rural Ontario. So for him to characterize this as a demonization of Toronto is simply wrong.

What this can be characterized as is, can all members of this House, and particularly the Liberal members, for once in their 10 years understand what fairness and not trying to divide the province of Ontario are all about? You collect tax; tax should be shared back. If the revenue is collected from all of the people, then all of the people should receive a benefit from that particular source of revenue.

That's what it's about. That's what you'll vote on today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We will vote on this item at the end of regular business.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Ms. Fife moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 24, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act with respect to prorogation / Projet de loi 24, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative relativement à la prorogation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I'll be providing some context for the bill and rationale for supporting it. I will also be explaining why I feel this bill is so important, both professionally and personally. Obviously, I hope to make the case for supporting this new measure as it relates to our democracy and our responsibilities as legislators. I'm pleased that it has generated such a passionate response, not only from those who study such issues but citizens, young and old, who are listening and watching today.

It has been an interesting journey for me after the by-election. The very thought of working here and serving the public in this place carried with it such an enormous weight of responsibility. I, like many of you, entered this building with a sense of awe out of our respect for our

history as a province and, quite honestly, for those of all party stripes who have served before me. I certainly carried with me the hope of making a difference, and I still do.

Indeed, the people of Kitchener–Waterloo sent me here with a very clear mandate: "Get to work for us. Get results for us—jobs, health, education, health care—plus a renewed focus on social and economic justice." I believe that we are in a critical place in the history of this province, so why prorogation, and why now?

Almost three years ago, in March 2010, the late Jack Layton, then-member of Parliament for Toronto–Danforth, said these words in the House of Commons: "We must clearly re-establish the basic principles of our democratic system. The principle of ministerial accountability is critical. This means that the Prime Minister must be accountable to Parliament. And being accountable starts with ensuring that the Prime Minister cannot abuse his powers: first and foremost, the power to lock the doors of Parliament and halt the work of those who were elected by the people to represent them and speak for them."

1450

Which brings us to October 15, 2012: The government House leader has claimed prorogation happened because this chamber had become poisonous. Now, I'm not sure that that's a word anyone should use to describe democracy, no matter how difficult the process becomes. What is true is that, when the Premier closed the doors of Queen's Park, a lot of important work ended, including an investigation into the cancellation of the Mississauga and Oakville plants. The discussion over these matters was heated, to say the least, but there was good reason to question the gas plant issue, and Ornge and eHealth. But was proroguing the answer? I would suggest that running away from the hard questions around the gas plant scandal, instead of navigating through what is a growing mess that needs to be cleaned up, is simply not acceptable. We need to remember: We answer to the people of Ontario, and the Premier answers to this Parliament.

When I was visiting a grade 5/6 class at Elizabeth Ziegler Public School in Waterloo, I explained the concept of prorogation, sticking only to the facts and leaving the politics out of the conversation. The students replied with some indignation. They said, "That's just wrong." I tell you, I've heard that a lot: in stakeholder meetings, from business and health care leaders, from people in my community of all ages. Nurses, business leaders, farmers, professional athletes, wind turbine and auto insurance executives—they don't get to prorogue when life becomes too difficult.

Let's be clear: The citizens of this province don't care that the temperature was raised. They don't care that one party felt the other was being mean and the other contemptible. They want us to get to work. On October 15, the people of this province were not put first. Sadly, one party's interests came first.

Some of the more powerful stories of discontent about prorogation came from seniors. I believe that the senior

citizens in communities across Ontario understand—perhaps more than most of us—how fragile a democracy can be, and they understand that we can never take it for granted. We should never allow ourselves to become complacent, especially as legislators.

This was a lesson that I learned early in my life, from my family and also from a close friend who was a World War II veteran. His name was Jack Hale. He served as a tanker and he shared his wartime experience with me in my formative years. His stories informed my respect and my reverence for our democracy. I was fortunate to know him and to thank him. If he were alive, he'd be sitting right here in the members' gallery, cheering on this debate, because this debate is good for democracy.

Prorogation, when it is used as it was on October 15, has a negative impact on the health, democracy and economy of this province. This is indisputable. Proroguing outside the traditional and historical use of prorogation is indefensible, and we should be mindful of this emerging trend.

Traditionally, it has been an uncontroversial tool, but in December 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper set a different precedent when he asked Governor General Michaëlle Jean to prorogue Parliament to avoid the defeat of his minority government. This manoeuvre was repeated a year later, in December 2009. Despite the outrage of the public at that time and despite the objections of the federal opposition parties—both Liberal and New Democrat—we have seen the abuse of prorogation become a worrying trend.

In BC, Premier Christy Clark simply cancelled the entire fall session of the Legislature in September 2012. Newfoundland and Labrador followed—a year earlier. Then, of course, on October 15, 2012, here in Ontario—in this very building—then-Premier McGuinty decided unilaterally to request prorogation, while the Ornge investigation was ongoing and just before the committee investigating the gas plants planned for Mississauga and Oakville was to meet. That was the time to kick MPPs out of Queen's Park, while the Liberal Party looked after its own interests and selected a new leader. It was not right when Prime Minister Harper used prorogation to avoid accountability, and it was not right when then-Premier McGuinty used it. Prorogation was never meant to be a tool of avoidance.

Let's be clear: Ontario can raise the bar on accountability. We can signal to the people of this province that we take the business of this place seriously. This bill is an opportunity for redemption. We need to put an end to the abuse of what was intended to be a tool that would help this country's Legislatures function more efficiently.

Going back to Jack Layton's motion from 2010, which was designed to start a dialogue on putting limits on the ability of the Prime Minister to unilaterally and indefinitely prorogue: It received support from a noted constitutional expert, Peter Russell. Mr. Russell said:

"Part of Jack Layton's legacy is the motion he placed before the House of Commons in March 2010 requiring that a prime ministerial request to prorogue Parliament

for more than a week have the support of a majority of the House of Commons.

"It strikes me that the Layton motion is a good model for Ontario."

I think it is worth taking that advice seriously.

Let's be clear about what the amendment to the legislative act will be and what it can accomplish. This bill will ensure that if the Premier wants to prorogue the Legislature, she or he needs the support of a majority of MPPs by way of a resolution. This resolution would be date-specific, meaning the Premier could not shut the doors of the Legislature unilaterally or indefinitely.

Now, there will be some who say that this amendment further politicizes prorogation. For me, this statement is a clear reminder of how powerful language can be. When we say that we hope to take the politics out of prorogation, what this bill will accomplish is to remove the politics of one person—the Premier—or one political party from the politics of the people. Partisan politics should not trump the needs of the citizens we are elected to serve.

There will also be some in this House who point out that we only lost 18 days. Well, I'm here to tell you that you can't measure democracy in days, and it is an insult to suggest that 128 pieces of legislation dying on the order paper are inconsequential. We should also note that there is a cost to reintroduce all of the work, and the taxpayers of this province will continue to pay this price.

Today, we have an opportunity to recalibrate and to reset a new level of trust and accountability. We collectively have that power in this House, through the vehicle of this bill. We, as legislators, should be part of the decision to prorogue. Indeed, all of us fell victim to the decision to prorogue this Parliament on October 15, as did the citizens of Ontario.

We can do better; people expect us to do better; and I would urge my colleagues from both parties to support sending this bill to committee. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. John Milloy: It's a pleasure for me to speak just briefly. I know there are other members of the caucus over here who want to speak on the member's bill. I want to congratulate her. She's a new member and my neighbour from north of my riding, and a very welcome addition to this Legislature. It's her first private member's bill.

I want to say off the top, the idea of debating or discussing prorogation, which has gone from being an arcane parliamentary term to actually something that is in the public mind, is something that we're open to and certainly I'm open to, and I plan to support this motion—excuse me; the bill, I guess I should say.

But where I take a little bit of a different tack from the member is this kind of view that somehow prorogation is a horrible thing or a dirty word. The idea that prorogation, with the exception of what this government did last fall and what Mr. Harper did in Ottawa, is always used in simply administrative ways and is not used as it

was intended, as a pause during periods when, really, it's time for a pause; in periods when the political atmosphere has heated up to the point where the governments need to regroup and come forward—Mr. Speaker, that's simply wrong.

History will show that governments of all stripes—I would hasten to say, almost every single government, with the exception of maybe a few that have been a short time in office—have prorogued the House, and many have used the prerogation, as I said, as a way of pausing, as a way of dealing with the political atmosphere, which we did last fall.

The background of last fall is something that I think we all know. The Legislature had ground to a halt. It was a poisonous atmosphere here. We came forward, as a government, with our legislative agenda, and on top of that legislative agenda was a piece of legislation about public service pay. It was presented to the opposition in draft form, and we asked the opposition to use it as a starting point to come to us with their ideas, with their amendments, with how we would deal with it.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, if I may use the vernacular, we were told to pound salt. We were told they had absolutely no interest in dealing with that legislation. Not discussing, debating and amending it, Mr. Speaker—they didn't want to deal with it. Instead, we saw the spectacle of a witch hunt against a former member of this Legislature. We saw a political situation in which we had to do the prorogation.

The member from Kitchener—Waterloo presents what happened last fall as unique. It's by no means unique. I hear some of my friends across the way talking. I'd just like to talk about what Mr. Harris did when he was in power.

1500

I quote from the Hamilton Spectator, January 2, 2002: "The Legislature broke December 13 after a flurry of bills and regulations were passed.

"It was initially scheduled to resume sitting in March, but that was before Premier Mike Harris's surprise resignation announcement....

"Ontario Tories pick a new leader March 23, and the five candidates vying to replace him—four of whom are cabinet ministers....

"Because of the party's one-member, one-vote system, candidates are picked to meet as many potential supporters as possible....

"Once the new leader is in place, he or she will have to deliver a throne speech, pick a new cabinet and devise a new budget, suggesting the Legislature might not sit again until May or June."

I checked, and they actually came back May 9 of that year. So does it sound familiar? A Premier resigns with some political turmoil that's going on. He calls a leadership convention and prorogues the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, what happened last fall was not ideal. I am the first to admit it. Prorogation is something that we should debate and discuss. But to come to this Legislature and present what happened last fall as

something unique in Ontario's history—in fact, it follows years and years of individual Premiers who have made that call. Just as they call elections, they prorogue the Legislature as a way to regroup, to press "Pause" and move forward. As I say, I just wanted to speak briefly on this. I'll leave it up to other colleagues in the House to further carry on the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 24, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act with respect to prorogation.

This is clearly a timely bill in light of our recent circumstances here at the Legislature, and I believe that in the most recent case of proroguing, the system was indeed abused. The purpose of prorogation is for the government to stop and refocus. There are definitely legitimate times when prorogation is necessary for the health of a government. Furthermore, prorogation is not a new phenomenon.

My favourite story is that of Elizabeth I, who prorogued Parliament—for years, I might add—for a simple reason: that Parliament—and it was all men at that time, I would just remind viewers—was spending all of its time working on the issue of whom she should marry. She got tired of that, and so she prorogued. This, to me, is a great example of when it was necessary to prorogue.

However, I do not believe the circumstances in which the Liberals decided to prorogue were justified. I also believe that our recent prorogation was not in the spirit of democracy or historical precedent. Dalton McGuinty saw fit to shut down the Legislature for an indefinite period of time because his government was caught up in a scandal and did not want the opposition to shed light on his billion-dollar seat-saving gas plant fiasco, on top of the Ornge scandal. We, the opposition, were ready and willing to come to the Legislature and hold committee hearings. The government was not and took four months to call the Legislature back. This is an unacceptable amount of time.

Despite this abuse of power, the Premier was within his constitutional right to prorogue the Legislature. The Lieutenant Governor takes the advice of the Premier, not the Legislature. This is our constitutional and historical arrangement. If the Lieutenant Governor were to begin taking advice from the Legislature, as Bill 24 suggests, this would change our political system. Furthermore, the Lieutenant Governor's decision must be impartial. If there were a vote in the Legislature, his decision would no longer be impartial.

I would also like to point out a fundamental difference between a democracy—that is to say, the Legislature—and our constitutional monarchy, the representative of the crown. The Legislature and the crown hold different roles in our system. The Legislature debates policy, whereas the crown ensures responsible government and weighs the advice of the government's leader, the Premier. The crown is not obligated to take the advice of the Premier, but instead weighs the advice impartially and decides or

a course of action to take that it believes is in the best interests of the province. I do not believe that we should take this role away from our crown. If Parliament disagrees with the government of the day, then Parliament should vote no confidence in the government, thus ending the Premier's right to request a prorogation from the crown.

The root of the problem is the integrity of the people who have the responsibility. The mechanics are time-honoured. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to rise and speak in favour of the private member's bill brought forward by the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

I have to say, I was interested in listening to the government House leader's remarks. It brought to mind almost immediately one of the sayings my mom used when we were kids growing up. She used to say, "Dear, two wrongs don't make it right." And you know what? Ten wrongs or 20 wrongs in the history of prorogations that are politically motivated don't make it right, Speaker, and that's the fundamental issue before us with this bill.

This prorogation was odious. It was very, very obvious that the only reason the government was shutting the Legislature down was because it was trying to save its own political bacon and get out of the political hot seat. I say that because, in fact, the Premier today in question period all but admitted that. She said that not only did they do it for that reason, but also for the purposes of looking after their Liberal interests, which of course were to undertake a leadership race. They didn't want to be bothered with having to make the effort to come into the Legislature to do the people's work while they were taking care of their own party business. So they decided that it was time to prorogue the House.

It's interesting, because one of the things that I think has already been brought to light is the fact that there was the ongoing Ornge air ambulance scandal. There were the gas plants, of course, that were about to hit hearings the following day. There had been a fantastic by-election win in the Kitchener–Waterloo riding when, in fact, the Premier was trying to behave like a Conservative and thought he would win the previously Conservative riding. But New Democrats actually were happy to have a very positive relationship with the people of Kitchener–Waterloo, and we elected a New Democrat in that riding. All of these things, I think, were things that were growing problems for the Premier, and rather than deal with those problems in an upfront way, he decided to take the easy way out and shut down the Legislature.

There's something that I think needs to be said, and it's a characterization of the events that were happening in the House at that time. I don't buy for one minute the government's description of a House that became dysfunctional. For many days, weeks—in fact, over two and a half weeks—the government members and the Conservative members sat in this House and debated the

issue of contempt. New Democrats debated for one day. Why? Because we didn't want to tie up the chamber with the contempt issue when it came to the gas plant scandal. We wanted to get things rolling, to keep things moving, to make sure the Legislature could actually be doing its work.

It's passing strange that the government House leader would somehow characterize the dysfunction in the Legislature as something that was surprising. They were a major player in making it dysfunctional. They were the ones who were continuing the debate over and over and over again. At any time, that debate could have closed down and we could have had the issue in committee, but it worked to their benefit. It helped justify their story of prorogation—again, cynical, cynical silly games being played by the governing Liberals. We saw it over and over again in the fall. It ended in the prorogation, and we see it unfortunately to this day, Speaker, as we have resumed in the last couple of weeks.

I know the other members of my caucus want to speak to this, Speaker, so I'm not going to keep going except to say that we think it's about time that things get changed around and we actually listen to the will of the people. The will of the people was very clear, and still is: They don't like politically motivated prorogation. They think prorogation is fine. They get it that it has to happen from time to time when a government completes a mandate and wants to chart a new course with a new throne speech. They understand why it exists. But they do not like to see it being used for purely political reasons and for political advantage of the governing party.

That's what's wrong with what Mr. McGuinty did in the fall. That's what's wrong with what Mr. Harper has done. That's what's wrong when it gets used for that purpose. All we're saying is, let's not let it get used for that purpose anymore. Let's use it for the purpose it was intended for, but not for politically motivated purposes, Speaker. New Democrats believe that that's the best way to go.

I would hope we'll get some support from the Liberal benches and from the Conservative benches, because this bill at the very least needs to be in committee so we can actually do the work the people have asked us to do in terms of cleaning up this prorogation stink. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

1510

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I actually think this bill has a lot of merit, and the content of the bill elevates the discussion here more than the debate so far has elevated it. I want to congratulate the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for bringing forward a very thoughtful piece of legislation.

I think it's also a very positive piece to be considered, and whether it gets passed today or whether we find some other ways to make these improvements, I, certainly as a member, find this a helpful and constructive discussion. I think it's very helpful when newer members of the Legislature bring those fresh eyes. For

many of us who have been in municipal government, we find this place gets a little overly partisan and a little crazy sometimes.

All of us are political. We're members of political parties. I always find it a little humorous and ironic when, all of a sudden, some of us get up and accuse the others of being political. I think the leader of the third party was hopefully saying that with a certain amount of humour, given that every question period has had her reference Windsor and London, where there are upcoming by-elections. We're no different. I'm sure we will try to talk about Windsor and London as much as we can. But to sort of suggest that somehow this process is political, and you're not or we are—we're all political.

I think probably previous members—we've had prorogations under the Harris government for over a year, 11 months. There was one year under the Rae government where the Legislature was avoided for—I think it sat for 20 days. We were actually out of the House for 18 days that we would have been normally sitting out of the calendar because we don't sit for most of those—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please. Stop the clock. Everybody has had their opportunity to speak, and the House was nice and quiet. I would offer the minister the same opportunity.

Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I am being far gentler in my criticism than some of the members opposite were of my party and my government.

I think there's an opportunity here to work on this, because I think the substance of this bill makes a lot of sense. If we all had a little more humility, this could go a lot further. We could be better at this. We could use prorogation in a more measured way. I am very happy to work with the official opposition and the third party on building these things forward. I think there are some extraordinarily positive private members' bills before the House today. I plan on voting for some of them, and I even go further to plan on championing some of them. If we all just treated each other, as I've said many times—or as the Speaker has invited us to do—to be part of a race to the top, God, we could get so much done.

I was very impressed when I heard the Minister of Health and the member for Nickel Belt are producing a piece of legislation today that is going to save the lives of many people. Why aren't we doing that? My friend, the member for Trinity-Spadina, who is one of the most delightful members of this Legislature—he's witty and smart—is bringing forth something we all want to do, which is reform the OMB. The member for Kitchener-Waterloo has a great idea today. You can certainly count on my help to do that.

I don't think we have to toss up everyone's record. We've all been involved in prorogation. We've just changed our leader. We have a new leadership group. We've gone through a very difficult process. It's very hard to change while you're sitting in a session. That's really important. It's a hard process while you're in a

minority government, to change a leader, to get a new Premier. I think we did that in a very respectful way. I was very proud to be part of that leadership race. We treated each other with respect. I think we all came out of that saying, "Jeez, wouldn't it would be nice if we could come back and treat each other with greater respect?"

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to look to make sure if should be wrapping up now. I should be wrapping up now.

I want to thank the member for Kitchener-Waterloo very, very much for this. She brings fresh eyes and fresh energy. I want to thank the members of the third party for their positive discussion and bringing some very positive ideas forward today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The prorogation of the Ontario Legislature was the last tactical option available to Dalton McGuinty to avoid scrutiny of the growing power plant scandal.

The known tab has grown to over \$1 billion for the politically motivated cancellations of the Oakville and Mississauga gas-fired power plants aimed at saving Liberal seats in last year's election. What this means is that Parliament was closed, all debate suspended and any bills not already passed were cancelled. Moreover, suspending Parliament shielded the Premier and the Liberal government from having to answer any questions about what came up that week: Project Vapour. This sinister-sounding file name is where secret gas plant cancellation documents were found.

Had the Liberals not locked the Legislature, he and his ministers would have had plenty to answer for. Speaker, they had nowhere to go; no other card to play. There was documented proof that he had spent over \$1 billion cancelling the two power plants—four times what the Liberals claim it cost.

This scandal began when the Standing Committee on Estimates demanded documents from the energy minister. He refused, and the only avenue left was bringing a contempt-of-the-Legislature motion. The Speaker ruled there was indeed a basis for contempt, and this in fact was confirmed only this morning in committee by former Speaker Milliken.

He ordered the minister to turn over the documents. Some 36,000 pages were delivered, many whited out. One by one, members of the PC Party presented redacted documents and missing pages, yet 32 Liberal MPPs stood in this Legislature and insisted that every document was delivered. Two weeks later, Speaker, the Liberals turned over 20,000 additional documents, including files called Project—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I have listened to the member very carefully—stop the clock—and I would ask you to confine your remarks to the bill that's in front of us. I don't mind a small amount of comment as to why prorogation, but I think you're carrying it a little too far.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I'll continue with my talk on why we prorogued.

A few hours later and just days before the finance committee was to begin hearings into who ordered the documents to be suppressed, Dalton McGuinty resigned and prorogued Parliament, putting an end at that time to the contempt charge. But Speaker, here's where that turns diabolical: Dalton McGuinty prorogued Parliament to stop us from learning about his latest in a series of billion-dollar scandals. That is his true legacy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I want to commend the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. She is a breath of fresh air in this place, and this bill is indicative of that. This is a bill that's absolutely timely.

Many of us were lucky enough to watch the unveiling of the Jack Layton movie just recently this week. It's going to be on Sunday night, by the way, on CBC at 8 o'clock. The beginning of the Ornge Crush really started with Jack Layton taking on Michael Ignatieff and saying some pretty critical words. He said that if people in the world outside of Legislatures acted like Michael Ignatieff and the Liberals federally and didn't show up for work most of the time, they'd be fired. That's what this bill talks about. It talks about, again, Liberals not showing up for work, and, in fact, doing worse than that, Mr. Speaker: preventing anybody else from showing up for work as well. Truly, what they did here suspended democracy.

I listened intently to the House leader across the way. He's wrong, by the way. It's the first time in the history of Queen's Park that a Premier suspended the operation of the Legislature after a committee has been directed to investigate allegations of contempt. No one—not Peterson, not Harris, not Eves or Rae even—now that Rae, of course, is a Liberal; we have to remember that—did that. Not one did that. And by the way, no other Premier has ever suspended the operation of the House by prorogation to run a leadership campaign, which we heard the Premier today admit. She said point blank the reason they prorogued the House was to run a leadership campaign for the Liberal Party. Not Davis, not Harris, not Robarts, not Frost, not Drew, not Hepburn—none of them ever did that, even though they ran leadership races while in office—and resigned, by the way.

1520

Here we are: a simple bill, an absolutely necessary bill, a bill we should all support so that we don't have to have this happen again. And again, commendations to Catherine, our new member from Kitchener–Waterloo, on an excellent bill at the perfect time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of—

Mr. Michael Prue: Aboriginal Affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker. I'm happy to speak on this bill.

Let me say this about the prorogation: Everybody who was in the House this morning—and we heard what the Premier said with respect to a question on prorogation. She made it quite clear that she was looking forward to the debate that this private member's bill would cause. It's a debate that all members of this House should have, whether they're on the Liberal side, the Conservative side or the NDP side.

The history of prorogation in the parliamentary tradition goes back 300 or 400 years. All parties in England and in Canada, and then more recently, have made use of prorogation. I've got the statistics here, but suffice it to say that the Conservative Party, when they were in government, used it extensively; the NDP did when the NDP was headed up under then-Premier Rae; and, frankly, the Liberals have used it. It's a protocol of this chamber that frankly, as the Premier has said, needs to have a new look—a fresh look at it; perhaps all the issues surrounding the prorogation do require some reform and some adjustments so that the House is assured that prorogation will be used modestly, if I can use that expression.

But having said that, after this chamber was prorogued in the middle of October, we worked very, very hard here. In fact, during this period of prorogation, we reached an agreement with AMAPCEO covering 10,000 public servants. We reached another agreement with the OMA—25,000 doctors. We reached an agreement with OPSEU—a two-year collective agreement. I can tell you that the AMAPCEO agreement took 1,000 hours of bargaining. The OMA agreement we worked on over a period of two years, right up until just recently. The OPSEU agreement—700 hours of bargaining. In addition to that, there was all sorts of work done in the respective ministries.

This idea that, because this chamber is prorogued, somehow government shuts down, is a false idea. Even when we adjourn for the summer months, there are cabinet meetings under way, there are committee meetings under way; I'm sure that the opposition is doing their work that they do in preparation. So the idea that prorogation is some tool to shut down the House is not the case.

We look forward to the debate that this bill is going to engender now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased, first of all, to recognize the member from Kitchener–Waterloo as a new member here. I commend you for your initiative here.

I do think it's really a little bit—being private member's bills—popular. There's no question about that. I say that you've got to put it in context, and I think the member from York–Simcoe's remark was very well-informed in referring to the history of this, the 500 years that prorogation has been in place—you could say from 1215, from the point of the Magna Carta itself. It's the right of the Prime Minister—or in our case, the Pre-

mier—to speak directly to the Lieutenant Governor or, in the case of the Prime Minister, directly to the Queen or the Governor General—in confidence and, in that confidence, to refocus. That's important for the leader of the country or the province, to have those tools to do that.

What is unacceptable here is what happened under Premier McGuinty. It wasn't just the one event—and I'll be a very short time here. Yes, it's important to stop and refocus. Then, you ask why he stopped and focused: Because he was getting pilloried on the whole fact of the wasteful spending on the gas plants, period—and not producing the documents. He was running against a wall, so he just turned the lights out and sent everyone home for four months, 127 days—unacceptable. So there's a reason for this debate today.

I would say that the NDP cannot take the top of the hill on this. In the 35th Parliament, you actually had three prorogations during your time. Not only that; you also had a vote where you opened up every contract in the province of Ontario. So you can't claim the high ground on this point. Although I agree with the sentiment here, it's the politics, like Mr. Murray said—it's the obvious politics of it all, abusing this, knowing that in private members', it's actually going nowhere.

I would say, in respect to history—and this point is most important—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

Mr. John O'Toole: Stop the clock. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: If you wish to have a dialogue, I'd ask you to take it outside.

Member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Minister of Transportation says, let's be honest here; it's all politics. There is a game here, and I put to you—we'll see at the time of the vote. The tools that a Premier, whether it's Bob Rae, David Peterson, whoever it is; Michael Harris—I would say that they need to have the tools. Any leader would need them. As indeed the member from York-Simcoe said, the Queen herself interrupted and prorogued Parliament.

Our democratic system is founded on principles and fundamentals. I tend to support that. The obvious politics of the debate here today are important, and yes, we should look at the standing orders and the orders of the Legislature.

I agree with one section, and that section has to do with an end date. We shouldn't all be left in the dark, and that's exactly what Dalton McGuinty did. He shut off the lights and sent everybody home.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président. Moi aussi, je voulais juste ajouter quelques petits commentaires aux commentaires de mes collègues. En français, ça s'appelle la Loi modifiant la Loi sur L'Assemblée législative relativement à la prorogation.

Une prorogation, en français, ça se dit mal; ça ne se dit pas. C'est un mot qui accroche pour bien, bien des raisons.

M. Rosario Marchese: Et que personne ne comprend.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Et que personne ne comprend. Donc, en général, les gens disent: «On a fait un pirogui.» Ca, c'est plus facile à dire et tout le monde comprend. Un pirogui, c'est bon; une prorogation, ça ne l'est pas. Un pirogui avec des patates et tout ça, j'adore ça; une prorogation, pantoute.

Une prorogation, c'est vraiment comme l'effacement magique de M. Clean. Tu sais, lorsque que tu sors ça, tu effaces les 128 projets de loi qui étaient déjà présentés. Tout ça, c'est parti. Prendre une pause, c'est quelque chose. Une prorogation, c'est beaucoup plus qu'une pause; c'est que tu effaces tout le travail qui avait été fait. Et ça, tout le travail qui avait été fait a été effacé pour des raisons partisans. Donc, là, tout ce qu'on demande dans le projet de loi, oui, ce sont des privilèges de l'Assemblée qui est là depuis des siècles et des siècles, et on respecte les assemblées protocolaires. Mais ce qu'on est en train de dire c'est amenons-le en 2013 pour qu'en 2013, si on a à sortir notre effacement magique, notre prorogation, ça va se faire d'une façon ouverte pour des raisons qui bénéficient aux Ontariens et Ontariennes, et pas comme ce qu'on vient de voir le 15 octobre dernier quand le premier ministre du temps, M. McGuinty, a décidé de faire une prorogation et de tout arrêter pour des raisons partisans, parce qu'il avait besoin d'air pour son parti, parce que ça commençait à aller mal, leurs affaires. Ça ne faisait pas juste commencer, en fait; ça allait vraiment très mal.

Mais, du côté des Ontariens et Ontariennes, eux ont tout perdu. Donc, ce qu'on dit est que c'est vraiment le temps de mettre ce projet de loi-là en place pour amener la prorogation en 2013. Merci, monsieur le Président.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I do want to acknowledge and congratulate the member from Kitchener-Waterloo on her maiden piece of legislation that she has brought forward. But I want to frame my remarks with this date, this year, 1848. Eighteen forty-eight was a couple of centuries ago. 1848 was the year we won responsible government in the province of Ontario. That is actually a very important thing to understand, Mr. Speaker. We actually fought for responsible government in the province of Ontario.

1530

I want to bring reference to a book that I think members of this Legislature would do well to read on this matter—it's called Canada's Founding Debates; it's edited by Janet Ajzenstat, Paul Romney, Ian Gentles and William Gairdner—which enumerates a lot of the debates that happened prior to Confederation with respect to responsible government. I think we would do well to read those remarks, and I wish I had more time to talk about what's in this book with respect to that.

My main criticism, Mr. Speaker, is that this is a foundational principle of our parliamentary system, a foundational principle that was hard-fought. We just saw

this bill for the very first time yesterday. In effect, we are asked to change a foundational principle of our parliamentary system in 24 hours. That's simply not enough time to have an adequate debate about these issues.

I don't want to talk about the politics surrounding the prorogation that happened in this Legislature because we're going to have an opinion on this. But ultimately, responsible government means government for the people and of the people. We don't really know, despite what the leader of the third party said, what the people actually think on this matter. I think we would do well to pause to consider the ramifications for a foundational principle of this Legislature and to take a step outside of politics.

I agree with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure with respect to raising the level of debate and taking the politics out of it. I do want to have a reasoned debate about this, but 24 hours simply isn't enough time to debate a very important bill such as this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Last fall, MPPs were locked out of Queen's Park for what can only be summed up as political reasons. The doors were shut, but more importantly, the work that we had been sent here to do just over a year before was completely scrapped. Everything that had not received royal assent died on the order paper that day. Bills like amendments to the air ambulance act, a bill to take the HST off home heating, Ontario's Wood First Act, changes to the electricity system operator act—all dead so the governing Liberals could pick a new leader. The work of committees, private members' business and a number of government bills that we were all told were essential bills were gone—dead and wasted. All of that time that we had put in, that we had invested in those bills, was also wasted.

At a time when we needed to be here to roll up our sleeves and work together for the people of this province to get us out of this recession, the doors were closed. People were looking to this House for leadership. Instead, what they got was a Liberal leadership race. Prorogation was not necessary.

This bill seeks to correct some of the wrongs that were committed, all in the name of politics, by this government. This bill doesn't say that we can't prorogue. It does say that if we are going to prorogue, we need to have respect for the residents of this province and stand here and defend our actions. It takes the power out of the backrooms and puts it in the hands of our province's democratically elected representatives.

I'm very pleased to stand here and offer my unequivocal support for this bill today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to do the one-minute waltz in 30 seconds.

I listened to the members speak about how the whole point is, it has happened in the past, others have done it, blah blah blah. I'll say what Andrea Horwath said: Just because it was done that way in the past and somebody

did something wrong in the past doesn't mean we shouldn't try to correct the situation now.

Clearly, there's an opportunity here to resolve what is a serious, legitimate problem. You don't prorogue a House at the beginning of a session in order to hide from an issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Kitchener—Waterloo, you have two minutes for a response.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I appreciate the feedback from members of all parties. I want to point out that some of the—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Excuse me; I'm talking here.

Some of the points that have been made have been good points. We all want to make democracy more accountable. I was asked on the Steve Paikin show, "Did anything good come from prorogation?" The only good thing I could see that came from that is a renewed interest to strengthen the democracy and the work we do in this House. There's no doubt that the only place where legislation can happen—and 128 pieces of legislation actually died on the order paper—is here.

I tried tweeting out questions to keep involved in a social media engagement kind of way. There was a mock Parliament here. But really, the reality is that the people of this province have sent us here to do a job, to do the work. It has nothing to do with the Queen proroguing to find a husband. It has nothing to do with making a point that prorogation is not a legitimate tool. It is a legitimate tool, but it was abused; it was misused for political reasons.

All this bill does is add another level of accountability, another measure of accountability. It brings it to us so that we can speak on behalf of the people. The member from Cambridge says, you know, "We don't really know what the people of this province feel about this." Actually, we do. We were looking for engagement from the population of Ontario, from citizens of Ontario. Do you know what we got? We got enraged people. That's not good for democracy.

The scholars are going to argue. The right thing to do with this bill is to send it to committee for further discussion, for further debate. That's good for democracy. That's good for all of us in this House. I urge everyone to support it, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote at the end of regular business.

RESPECT FOR MUNICIPALITIES ACT (CITY OF TORONTO), 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE RESPECT DES MUNICIPALITÉS (CITÉ DE TORONTO)

Mr. Marchese moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 20, An Act respecting the City of Toronto and the Ontario Municipal Board / Projet de loi 20, Loi portant

sur la cité de Toronto et la Commission des affaires municipales de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, you have 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill, because I think it's a timely one. People have been waiting for this kind of a bill for a long time. I know that many people in Ontario are arguing we should get rid of the Ontario Municipal Board. I would be a proponent of that. If the government were to move such a motion, you would find me supporting it.

That's not what my bill does. What my bill does today—and by the way, it's called An Act respecting the City of Toronto and the Ontario Municipal Board. What it does is to free Toronto from the OMB. It exempts Toronto from the Ontario Municipal Board's oversight. That's what it does, and that's why the people who are in these galleries are here today. I was going to name them all. I won't do that, because it will take too long. I just want to thank them for being here, because these people, these citizens, have been fighting the OMB for a long, long time. Many of them are part of residents' associations, a few of them are architects, and many are just good, strong, active citizens wanting to do the right thing.

What does the OMB do? The Ontario Municipal Board settles land use disputes having to do with minor bylaw changes and/or bigger changes, major rezoning. That's basically what they do.

And who are these people? Well, there are 25 of them, appointed by government, whoever is in government at the time. They are unelected and unaccountable. In my view and in the view of many Torontonians, this is a serious problem.

The OMB is a gladiatorial place. What does it mean? It's about having developers who have a lot of money to hire good planners, good lawyers—great lawyers, that can be paid \$1,000 an hour—versus cash-strapped citizens who, yes, can afford to pay the \$120 fee, which is not the problem, but don't have the money to be able to hire lawyers or the time to be able to defend themselves, and overworked planners. Who do you think is going to win that fight? Which gladiator is going to win that one? I'm not a gambling man. My money's on the developers with the deep pockets. They're the ones who win most of the time.

1540

A paper presented at the Canadian Political Science Association conference in 2009, studying the period of the years 2000 to 2006, found that when developers and the city faced off at the OMB, developers emerged victorious 64% of the time. You get the picture; right? It's the people with money who tend to win. It's just the way the system works. It's not a level playing field. It can never be a level playing field.

My bill would exempt Toronto from the OMB's oversight and it would have the power to establish an appeal body, should the city of Toronto decide to do that.

There was a motion passed at city hall last February and the motion basically says what I am presenting here

today, and that motion to exempt Toronto from the OMB was supported by 34 councillors and opposed by five. That tells you there is strong support at the city level for the city to be able to have the power to be exempted from the OMB.

I know that Minister Murray supports this because I've seen the letter that he sent to the minister. I know there are probably many, many members in the city of Toronto who are likely to support this. This is good. I believe it speaks to the pressure that we've all been getting in the city of Toronto to make sure that the party that should have a say is the city and not some unelected individual that makes choices around development, that makes decisions around development.

I want to quote something from Minister Gerretsen because, in 2005—the bill was actually proclaimed or passed in 2007—they wanted to put power back in the hands of cities, something the Tories love. I'm hoping to hear from them because from the House leader's comments on my bill, I wasn't sure whether you folks might be supporting it, but you fine people love the idea of cities having greater control of their own development, and here's what Mr. Gerretsen said: "We want to put land use planning decisions back where they belong—in the hands of municipal decision makers. We want to give Ontario municipalities more power to determine what is best for their communities." That never happened. It never happened.

What Bill 51 did, which was a good thing, was to do the following: The bill's amendments to the Planning Act stated that the OMB decisions would have regard to municipal decisions and plans. So the government, at the time, felt that if you put in such language, "having regard to," that the people at the Ontario Municipal Board who make those decisions would of course be listening to what the various cities doing planning have to say.

Well, in 2009, the Ontario Divisional Court ruled that "have regard to" basically means nothing. "The OMB only has to provide minimal deference to the municipality," the court ruled—"only minimal deference." It means, "Yes, we heard you, but no, we're not going to listen to you." That's all it means. It means that that individual, unelected and unaccountable, says, "I heard your argument, city of Toronto. I heard the argument of the developers, and I kind of like the developer's point of view." That's basically what it means, and that's basically the way they're ruling.

I want to point out that last January, the OMB cited minimal deference when it ignored the region of Waterloo's growth plan which had been developed in consultation with the community over a decade. Instead of reflecting the community's official plan and desire to reduce urban sprawl, the OMB chose to massively increase the acreage available for development from 197 acres to 2,593 acres. It's nuts. It doesn't make any sense.

The OMB decision relied on growth calculations that assumed the demand for sprawling single-family homes would continue in the future, as it had in the past, as if the Places to Grow Act and the Greenbelt Act didn't

exist. Sprawl in the past compelled the region of Waterloo to accept sprawl forever. Only last week, the OMB approved a high-rise development at 154 Front Street East, right in the area that made up the original old town of York, now the city of Toronto. The approved building was far higher than city planners had recommended. The OMB rejected the recommendations of city planners, city heritage experts and a city design review panel. The OMB ruled that since the city had allowed high-rise buildings nearby in the past, it was obliged to allow another. It doesn't make any sense.

So what you've got is planners spending a whole lot of time talking about what is essential for its city. In this particular instance, you have the city's heritage experts saying, "No, we can't have this extra development," and the city design review panel agreeing with them, and saying, "You can't do that." But the OMB said, "Too bad, so sad." Well, why the heck do we need a planning department? Why don't we just get rid of the planning department of the city of Toronto and anywhere else, for that matter? Because if you take this to the OMB, the OMB will decide whatever they want to do. Again, it is absurd what is going on in relation to the OMB.

I want to cite another example, which is something that my friend Catherine Naismith, who's here—and the letter that was signed by the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, by Susan Ratcliffe. They're very concerned about protecting the silhouette of this Legislature, and a number of people have been fighting this for quite some time. I had a bill. The previous Speaker was trying to persuade the government to express a provincial interest and did not. So the OMB ruled, on a decision regarding 21 Avenue Road, that it could go ahead with that development, meaning that when you stand on College or Queen, you'll be able to see it. The OMB's ruling means that even though the city of Toronto fought against it and even though they made changes in 2012 to the official plan amendment to protect the full silhouette—even in spite of those changes, they're likely to be taken to the OMB. The point is that it's time to give the city of Toronto the powers it needs and deserves.

They are—how old are they?—129 years old. It's time that they be given the powers that they deserve to be able to do planning on their own without having to be overridden by an institution—

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. We always invite people into the chamber to observe what's going on, but I would ask our audience not to participate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The buck should stop at the city level. We need to be able to give the city of Toronto the power it needs to be able to plan its own growth.

By the way, I want to say to the member from Mississauga—Streetsville that if Mississauga members were to bring a motion here saying, "We want to be free from the OMB," I would support it as well. And if there is any other city here in Ontario that says, "We want to become part of this bill," and there's a way that I can do that, I

welcome it, because I believe that every city that has a planning department and is willing and ready to be able to do that, I say, God bless. They should have that power.

So if any other member, Conservative or Liberal, wants to bring forth amendments to be able to say, "I want my city to be included," I will support that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm very happy to speak to this because OMB issues are of huge importance in my riding of Willowdale. Since I was elected in 2003, every week, every Friday when I'm in my constituency office and at other times during the week and in the summer, I receive calls, I do meetings—and I do lots of them on all of the frustrations that the citizens of Willowdale are experiencing with the OMB. So I want to thank the member opposite from Trinity-Spadina for bringing this private member's bill forth. I thank him because the effect of his private member's bill is it's going to cause this chamber—on the Liberal side, the Conservative side and the NDP side—to start thinking seriously about OMB reform.

1550

This morning, I saw a story in the Toronto Star—and I'm going to quote the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Minister Linda Jeffrey. She said that the minority Liberal government is "keeping an open mind" about the NDP proposal.

Later on, at the end of the article, the article makes this point: "Last year, when she was municipal affairs and housing minister"—referring to then-Minister Wynne, now Premier Wynne. The paper goes on to say, "Premier Kathleen Wynne expressed the need for changes to the OMB." I thank the member for bringing this bill forward because it's going to engender a very serious discussion about OMB reform, and I support OMB reform.

Now, I'm going to make four points here, because there are four issues that everybody has to look at. First of all, whatever we do in this chamber, over 400 other municipalities in Ontario are going to look at it and say, "Ah," and they're going to draw lessons from what we do with respect to the OMB in Toronto. So we have to be mindful of the rest of Ontario.

Number two, if the OMB is just sort of completely abolished—wiped off the board—and the decisions on these planning issues are left to the planning departments and the city council and so on, there's always the question, then, of what does a ratepayer group do if they're unhappy with that decision? Right now they're unhappy with the OMB and they don't want to go there because it's very, very costly. If there's no OMB and they're unhappy with the decision, then their resort is to go through the court system. I just caution people: If you think the OMB is expensive, you ain't seen anything yet until you get into the court system. We're going to have a whole series of issues to deal with there. That's the second point.

The third point is that it's my understanding—and I stand to be corrected on this, but one of the issues in

Toronto, anyway, is that in fact, when push comes to shove and you drill into it, the city of Toronto does not have an official plan. There being no official plan, there's a whole lot of interpretation as to what buildings can go up in what locations and so forth and so on. I think if there was a city of Toronto official plan carved in stone—carved in stone—then the OMB, with respect to Toronto, would have to follow the rules that are clearly in the act that say that the OMB can only interfere with the decision if it's contrary in law to the Planning Act. There being no official plan in Toronto, that's one of the—maybe we should address OMB reform and address the official plan reform with respect to the city of Toronto.

My last point is that, as the member opposite from Trinity–Spadina said, the buck should stop at the city of Toronto. I guess what he means is the buck should stop with the planning department, but absent of an official plan and absent an OMB, people will be driven to the courts. As I've said, if you think the OMB is expensive, wait till you get into the court.

Having said that, thank you for bringing this forward. I look forward to the debate on reforming the OMB.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: First of all, I'd like to say I appreciate the member from Trinity–Spadina putting this forward. I think it's a really important thing to actually get to talking about. I've actually been speaking about this since my days as a councillor in Barrie, where the OMB has had a dramatic effect on how a city like Barrie's rapid growth has been affected by, really, a board that's unelected and unaccountable, and has constantly, over and over again, overruled duly elected officials in our own city. It is frustrating, and I can tell you first-hand as a councillor how frustrating it is when you have not only a majority vote of a council but actually, in many cases, a unanimous vote of a council—which can be difficult to achieve at times—be overturned by a unelected board, and in almost all cases a faceless board, too. Many of the people who are actually making these decisions never even get to see or face the people who are overturning their decisions. It's patently unfair.

I think we're one of only two provinces in the country that has a board that is equal to the OMB, or whatever it's called in any other province. If they can, in other provinces, do without an OMB and have a good planning resource, then why can't we either?

One thing I do see here that's very positive is, I think, a general recognition from all three parties that there needs to be a critical and important reform of the OMB, at the very least.

Mr. Bill Walker: Not just Toronto.

Mr. Rod Jackson: But, as my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound states, not just Toronto; I'll remind everybody, this isn't the province of Toronto; it's the province of Ontario. Although I respect the member's offer to invite all cities to join in his bill, this is something that, I think, needs to enjoy a much greater discussion in the political atmosphere.

We need to talk to municipalities about what they need. We know that many rural municipalities don't have the capacity, or don't have the option or the resources, to have an appeals process for the residents, the little guy who has got a development maybe going in next door to him, or across the road from him, or next to their kid's school.

The OMB does provide an outlet, an opportunity, for them to actually have a say and appeal decisions that are made by their local councils. That, I'm okay with. If that can be embedded within a municipal structure, I think that's probably the best way to go about it. But that requires, I think, a very intense review with all the municipalities in the province of Ontario, not just Toronto. If we start piecemealing this out and taking Toronto out of the OMB, when do we take Barrie out of the OMB, and how does that discussion happen? When does it happen with Owen Sound? When does it happen with Burlington? When does it happen with Oshawa? When does it happen with Ottawa, Kingston and any of these other cities, and how does it happen? Are we going to have an equal playing field with municipalities who don't have all the resources in place that are similar to Toronto or Barrie? It just doesn't work if you don't have a system in place.

That's where I think this bill is a little lacking. Although I do appreciate the spirit of it and actually quite agree with the spirit of it, I think the execution of it needs to be much broader. I look forward to hearing more in the debate, and certainly I look forward to, as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs mentioned, a really wholesome review. I hope they're serious about that across the floor; that they actually do plan on reviewing the OMB and making sure that there are discussions that happen that are meaningful, that will help cities make good plans for the future and take into account that there are people who are duly elected to make these decisions and know their community better than any unelected official who has never even set foot in that community.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to stand and join the debate here. I represent the riding of Davenport, a fine Toronto riding, and I'm really happy to support this bill. For viewers tuning in from home, we're talking about the OMB and, specifically in Toronto today, the impacts here.

I want to congratulate my colleague from Trinity–Spadina, Mr. Marchese, who has been a strong advocate for our city for many years. I also want to recognize folks who've come in to support this and push this issue forward; we can't do this good work without you. The member from Trinity–Spadina can do this work because you've organized and supported it, so thank you very much.

The OMB is a provincial body, a provincial agency. It's responsible for settling land disputes, and I hear quite clearly in my riding of Davenport that constituents are fed up with the OMB. It has not served them very well.

It's clear to me that this is an unaccountable body; it's an outdated body. It's obviously heavily in favour of the wealthiest developers, the people with the deepest pockets, and this is obviously problematic for good public planning in our city.

I heard the comments from the member from Barrie, and I agree: Let's send this to committee and let's ask for a debate and see how this works in other communities as well. I can tell you: From my perspective in our city of Toronto, this makes a lot of sense.

With the OMB, lack of accountability means there's nobody actually elected on this board. Board members are appointed right here from cabinet, and they then stay on [*inaudible*] time, and it means that we don't have the kind of accountability that we'd see if city councillors had an actual say on these issues. Councillors in Toronto have come out strongly in favour of this. They've asked to be freed from the OMB—a vote of 34 to 5 in favour of doing exactly what we've proposed here today—so I think we should listen to them.

1600

I think we have a problem with accountability in this province right now. We have a problem when it comes to casinos in this province right now. I know that people in my community would really like a true consultation on that issue, and they can get that through a referendum, which is something we've been advocating for.

This issue of unaccountable agencies is prevalent, and it's having impacts directly in my community. We have the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., the agency there, and it acts more like an advocate for gambling, in my experience at this point, than a regulator. People in my community of Davenport feel like they're being forced into the idea of having more gambling in downtown Toronto, which feels unacceptable.

We've all seen regulators like the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, which is a federal body, but at the same time, it advocates for the nuclear industry, not for safety in our community. As a result, we have uranium processing happening right in our neighbourhood. We've seen these agencies and how unaccountable they are. We have Ornge right here, right?

I think the member from Trinity–Spadina has identified another agency that is not accountable, that's not meeting the needs of our community, and we need to deal with this.

Lastly, I would say, in terms of this basket of agencies that are unaccountable—we have Metrolinx, which has not listened to our constituents in the west end when it comes to electrification of the air-rail link. In fact, we have members on the board there who are now advocating paid lobbyists for casinos in Toronto.

My constituents are saying that we need to do better, we must do better. We need planning that's in the public interest, and this shouldn't be left to just people with the deepest pockets on the OMB. It is not just a Toronto issue. I've been around this province and seen the impacts when it comes to urban sprawl, and we need to deal with this. So we can do better.

I'm going to leave some time for my colleagues who want to speak to this issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm very happy to speak on this issue. It's a very important issue for my community in Ottawa, and I have been working along with my community for some time on ways we can reform the OMB, because it is very much needed.

I appreciate the bill from the member for Trinity–Spadina. Obviously it does not do anything for my city, but here are some challenges and I want to suggest how we can improve the OMB process.

The challenge, I think, with Mr. Marchese's bill is that abolition of the OMB does not help, because if there is a decision of city council that has to be challenged, then we are going to the courts. Courts are more expensive, take a longer time, and there is no expertise. By the way, judges are unelected and faceless, and they are appointed as well, so the difference is minimal. That's a significant challenge. Clearly, the status quo does not work. We need to reform the OMB.

As to the local appeal body scenario that the member opposite has suggested, that already exists in the Planning Act. So you really don't need this particular bill, because if the city of Toronto wants to opt out of the OMB and resort to a local appeals board, they have that opportunity to do so right now under the Planning Act.

What I think needs to be done and what I have suggested in my community—we actually held a community summit on this where almost 100 people attended—is that we have to level the playing field within the OMB and we need to create a system that allows for more community-inspired development. So here are my very quick four suggestions—I'm sure there are maybe other ways, but this is what my community and I think is a way to do things.

One, what we need to do is encourage more development of community design plans. Communities spend a lot of time with their municipalities to develop community design plans, or CDPs. I know that has been used in Ottawa quite often. What we need to do, then, is incorporate those CDPs into the official plan of the city, once they are approved by the council, so they become enforceable, as opposed to just an aspirational document. That's number one.

Number two, I think we need to change the appeal mechanism or the way the OMB works today, where it's a hearing from the beginning, more to a process where it's a judicial review, that they can only overturn a municipal council decision if there is an egregious error council has made. That will require the planning department and the councillors to work together to make sure that they come up with coherent decisions as opposed to wink-wink, nudge-nudge political decisions, because they can point to the OMB for overturning, and that happens often, not only in Toronto, not only in Ottawa, but in municipal councils across the province.

The number three thing we need to do is require mandatory mediation at the OMB. It's voluntary medi-

ation right now, and every time there's mediation, the chances are very high that the process results in a win-win solution for the community and for the developer and for the city council, so I think what we need to do is have mandatory mediation within the OMB so that we can make the process less litigious, less adversarial and focus on common solutions.

Lastly, in order to have a level playing field, we need to have legislation that will prevent strategic litigation against public participation. In the last session of Parliament, I tabled an anti-SLAPP bill, Bill 132, and I encourage folks who are here to look at it. That will allow that developers are not using tools to suppress communities when they want to talk about issues that are important.

I'll stop right here, but this is an important issue, and I appreciate the member for bringing the matter forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased today to rise to speak to the legislation brought forward by the member from Trinity-Spadina, Bill 20, the Respect for Municipalities Act (City of Toronto), 2013.

Earlier this week, the media reported that Toronto's population has just surpassed that of Chicago. We are currently standing in the fourth largest city on the continent. Los Angeles is still a ways off, but our California friend shouldn't get too complacent.

That's just one measure of the energy and vitality we have come to expect of Canada's largest city, and it certainly doesn't come as a surprise. This is a city that punches above its weight, even in a province struggling with enormous challenges. But, of course, Toronto is still a work in progress, and we believe that its best days are ahead of it. The city faces a number of hurdles as it evolves, and they are too numerous to list in my allotted time, as the member from Trinity-Spadina may agree.

But in a broad-brush sense, it's safe to say that development is a key concern. The OMB is a mechanism that's part of the planning arsenal. It's mainly an appeals body for municipal planning decisions. It allows communities to challenge developers' proposals, and it allows developers to challenge municipalities' decisions. But it also allows citizens to appeal a council's decision that they can oppose.

The OMB can rule either way, or it can choose a third path of its own design. That is obviously a lot of power, and, no surprise, it has made the OMB a target for a lot of criticism. Currently, local decisions on a planning matter, including zoning bylaws and development approvals within Toronto's boundaries, can be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board.

Bill 20 would allow the city of Toronto to assume authority for all of those matters. Instead of the OMB, there would be a local appeals board created with the intention of resolving all planning disputes. The theory is that this would level the playing field and allow the appeal of citizens and city planners to be on the same footing as those of developers. But even if you take cash out of the equation, my guess is that developers are often

the most familiar when it comes to the ins and the outs of planning legislation, regulation and zoning. Maybe you would never arrive at a totally neutral playing field. All things being equal, the system would put power primarily in the hands of seasoned city planners, but reality is rarely that tidy.

There is no doubt that the OMB has its flaws. There is no doubt that it regularly creates considerable friction and frustration for municipalities, developers and residents alike. Incidentally, that is just another reason why the Ontario PCs believe all government agencies, boards and commissions should be reviewed to ensure that all are giving taxpayers value for money. The OMB should be part of this process.

Would Bill 20 solve those headaches or just move them to a new venue? I don't know, Speaker. The bill before us today is definitely a valuable springboard to an important discussion, but province-wide discussions have to precede legislation like this, so regrettably I cannot support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Beaches-East York.

1610

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand here in support of this bill.

It is no surprise that the city of Toronto has voted 34 to 5 for the abolition of the OMB; it is no surprise that the city of Mississauga has voted unanimously to abolish the OMB, and it will be no surprise to me or any of the members in here that every single town and city above a certain size will vote to follow suit. That's exactly what's going to happen if you allow this bill to go forward. Whether it's Barrie, whether it's Orillia, whether it's Burlington, it's going to happen.

I will tell you that it has been my experience, as a councillor, as a mayor and as an MPP, that this is a board that ought not to be there. I've seen what it has done to destroy communities. I have seen what it did to destroy the Leaside property owners when I was mayor of East York. I have seen what it has done to destroy the people who live on Glen Davis Ravine in Beaches-East York, who now have a bill of about \$100,000 that they're struggling to pay. I have seen what the OMB has done to the people in the Beach, who are struggling to try to find the money and the wherewithal to take on big development money.

I recall the chair of the Ontario Municipal Board, before a committee of this Legislature, coming in and brazenly stating that—she was asked, “What is your mandate?” She stated, “My mandate is to facilitate the development industry in this province.” That's what she said her job was; she believed it with all of her heart. Her job was not to look after communities, it was not to stand up for municipalities; it was to facilitate the development industry, and that's, in fact, what is happening.

I recall that the Legislature debated this whole thing about the OMB in 2005 and we did not do the right things. We had a majority government that saw fit to do other things, such as put in weak words like “have regard to,” which the courts have interpreted exactly as they have. They took away the right of appeal of ordinary

citizens who had not participated up until the time of the OMB hearing. They narrowed the focus on what could be argued by applicants. They allowed greater use of SLAPP, so that citizens could be put in fear. They withdrew ministerial accountability to reverse the OMB, so that the minister and that government today have no authority over an unelected body.

Today, the residents are cowering and they're fighting, and they have rearguard actions.

There are visioning studies in my riding, as well—as the member from Ottawa Centre talked about—but they are ignored. There are planning studies; they are ignored. The costs are prohibitive to ordinary people. The expertise of neighbourhoods and what it's like in their neighbourhood is completely ignored. City council is completely ignored.

Think about the cities in which you live. We're all trying to help them. They are having an equally hard time as we are in balancing the budget. The city of Toronto alone spends millions upon millions of dollars defending its decisions before the OMB each and every year. They have legal counsel, they have planners, they have people that they have to bring in to fight these, and they're not listened to at all, because the OMB is now brazen to the point that they argue minimal deference, and the courts have ruled they don't have to listen to what the elected representatives, the neighbours or anyone except the developers has to say.

I ask the Conservatives to think about what you're doing here today. I have listened intently to the leader of the Conservative Party over these last many months, and he's talking about getting rid of useless boards and commissions. If ever there was a useless board and commission, this is it. If you're not willing to get rid of this useless board and commission, then don't start talking about getting rid of some of the others.

The city knows they can go without it. The city of Mississauga and Hazel McCallion know they don't need it, either. The city of Barrie knows you don't need it. And I will tell you that the citizens of this province know you don't need it, either.

Please, allow this to go to committee; allow it to be heard. Allow your own municipalities to tag along if they want. And please give the authority back to ordinary people. That's where it should be, not in an unelected body.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: First of all, I want to thank my neighbour and my friend, the member for Trinity-Spadina, for bringing this forward.

I just want to say two things. One, I will vote for and enthusiastically support his private member's bill. The second thing I'd like to say is, beyond that, I think significant reform of the OMB of this nature and respecting the city of Toronto to give it this option is really critical, and I look forward to working with you in the coming months as we try to do this. Hopefully, before we all face the electorate again, we will actually have something to show for it.

I also want to thank my Premier. Premier Wynne has asked us, on this side of the House, to be less partisan. She has said in this House many times that private members' business is almost when we're a city council. We set aside our partisan differences. We don't bring political rhetoric; at least we're trying not to on this side. We show each other the kind of respect that those of us in municipal government have shown. I want to thank the member because I listened to his speech and it was non-partisan, it was practical, and it addressed the people's business. My hat is off to you, my friend.

So, you know, I have to tell you, I lived in, as some of you have teased me about, and been the mayor of the city that is the capital city of the next province over. Miraculously, we don't have an OMB. We didn't have an MMB. And the world didn't fall apart. Development happened. Developers were happy. It wasn't anti-development, which is a thing I've said.

"You don't have an OMB?" All of a sudden you're going to kill development and, you know, Communists will take over and will nationalize the banks, or Hugo Chavez will come back to life or something. It is so ridiculous that places like Alberta have perfectly fine development and beautiful cities, and Vancouver, which doesn't have a municipal board like this, is rated one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

When I was mayor, we passed our official plan. I would like to say to my friends at Toronto city council, as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs would say, can you learn how to pass an official plan? I have to tell you, it's very hard to be a downtown resident when my city council and mayor can't figure out how to pass an official plan. I have 47 condo towers going up, at a level of development—my constituency is at 200% of the intensity targets set out in Places to Grow, 20 years ahead of schedule. A big part of that responsibility is on the shoulders of the city government that isn't doing its job. We don't even have a secondary plan, which is what we used to have. So I want them to actually take that responsibility seriously and not blame us or the OMB.

On the same hand, we have to take responsibility for ourselves here. We would do first reading of our official plan in Winnipeg. We would then send it to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who would then review it. It would go to cabinet. Commentary would be taken. It would be then amended and sent back to the city. There was a time frame and penalties if the province and the city didn't get the official plan done.

The city council would then debate second reading, make amendments, address the proposed amendment by the province at a macro level, pass second reading and send it back.

If there was an unresolvable issue, it was then referred to that municipal board, which only did hearings of the official plan and major consequential amendments. I think that's how it works in eight out of 10 provinces. It is very simple.

Then the municipality creates its own appeals. Calgary, Winnipeg, Halifax, much smaller but important

capital cities and others all have their own appeals process.

I think we, the folks in Toronto, are as intelligent and as capable as any other group of folks to do that. Developers actually are thriving. The rules are predictable. So the process is that.

I have to tell you, having sat through OMB hearings, it is a machine for consultants to make money. You bill \$500 an hour. Lawyers love it. Planners love it. Architects love it. No one makes more money. I mean, we could save everybody in business all that money and could actually have architects who are designing buildings, planners planning cities, and builders and citizens doing that. I'm tired of my constituents having to give up their Sundays to fight local development. I and my city councillors, Kristyn Wong-Tam and Pam McConnell, have a website called torontocentreplan.org, where we are doing our own 11 community plans together. My constituents have already articulated the kind of view that they want.

To realize Places to Grow, we've got to have not a neutral system but a system that works to align with government policies. You have my support. Thank you for your leadership, my friend from Trinity-Spadina.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the member from Trinity-Spadina. He's a good friend of mine. I think this is a reasonable proposal for discussion during private members' time.

I think it's important to put it in context. We're not talking about the 444 municipalities in the province.

Interjection.

1620

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Are you sure? Because I had time left when the member from Burlington spoke.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Yes, there were three minutes—that's what I was telling them.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Just hang on till we correct it.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Okay. You can take about 30 seconds off. He spoke for a while.

Okay. The member from Durham, you can resume.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Speaker. If you'd like to put four up there, that's fine.

The context of this is that the city of Toronto is no ordinary city. Respectfully, Mr. Marchese represents part of that. The city's 179 years old, and it has a population of 2 million-plus, maybe 2.5 million people, and in fact it's just been determined to be the fourth-largest city in North America. I think it's important to recognize that it's larger than many of the provinces in Canada—many of the eastern provinces and some of the western provinces as well.

Now, a further context to this is that the current government under McGuinty—and I'm not sure if it was the previous speaker—but they did, under the City of Toronto Act, have an opportunity to look at creating some tools for the city of Toronto, but I believe they failed to do so. They were afraid to give the city of Toronto—because then it would be another level of government. You've got the federal, provincial—now there'd be the city of Toronto, which would be, some would argue, its own province. They don't want to give any of the taxing tools away from the important city of Toronto—and too much flexibility.

My only concern with this bill is that this bill—and I have read it—amends almost everything in legislation that affects the city. I think, just in the few minutes—I think I have an extra minute left—the City of Toronto Act is amended; the Condominium Act; the Consolidated Hearings Act; the Development Charges Act; the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act; the Ontario Heritage Act; and the Planning Act itself—all of those are basically repealed. Those are instruments of the province to manage growth and where growth should occur.

I believe that if you fail to have the OMB—what happened before the OMB? These went to litigation in the courts. That's why they brought the OMB in years ago. In fact, in my municipality—I did serve as a councillor and a regional councillor for a few years—I see it as a thorn in the side.

I want to refer to the Minister of Municipal Affairs this morning in the article in the paper. Mrs. Jeffrey said that the Liberal government is keeping its mind open. That's kind of like a pass, in my view.

But I did hear Mr. Murray, who's been a minister and a mayor, and he's got some background—I think it's reasonable advice that he gives the House: This should probably go, under this government, to a further review of the Ontario Municipal Board. I agree with that, fully. I have to put it in the context of a larger reform: Mississauga's opposed to it, and who isn't opposed to it? But do they have the resources to properly manage the rights of applicants to make application for changes or amendments to the official plan?

In that context, this is an important discussion. In fact, today I would say that, in fairness, we've had three very strong private members' bills. What's important here, too, is how members are whipped to vote. I see almost every NDP member here; they've been whipped. I can put to you that it'll probably be a recorded vote. I'm very interested in how the Liberals will vote on it, to be honest. I think it's important to take the politics out of it—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: —and I will say to you, let's go on and get on with business. This needs to be reformed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure and privilege to speak in favour of the member from Trinity-Spadina's bill—long overdue. I remember when I was first elected about six and a half years ago, I brought in a bill that was very similar on behalf of Active 18—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: —which was from the great riding of Davenport. It wasn't even my own riding. But in those days, Mr. Speaker, Davenport didn't have such enlightened leadership so we in the New Democratic Party had to step in and defend them in front of the OMB and the government, which we did, and we called, then, for reform of the OMB.

So 10 years, we've had our friends across the aisle. Ten years—we need reform of the OMB now. I would suggest to everyone here, your good suggestions—there are some good suggestions—bring them to the committee. Put them forward as amendments. That's how the House is structured.

I appreciate the support, because I've been to the OMB too many times with community groups. You have a community group that took a day off work with absolutely no resources and no lawyer up against developers with lawyers and planners at their beck and call who are paid to be there. This is not a fair fight. Not only that, but to make it worse, then you get SLAPP suits. Then you get the developers going after people who have cost them money to even appear at the OMB. Even if you win, even if you lose, you're not safe as a community group in front of the Ontario Municipal Board.

So, absolutely, whether it's abolished or whether it's reformed, certainly, at the very least, this bill needs to pass. At the very least, we need to get it out of Toronto. Toronto has its own planning board, has its own appeal process. Why should we be spending hard-earned dollars to go up to the OMB when we've already made informed decisions at the city level?

Again, all of us have been in this position of defending our groups in our communities against large forces before a dysfunctional tribunal at the Ontario Municipal Board. It's time. It's been 10 years of Liberal rule, 10 years to get things done. We need it done now. It's been six years of bills like this being brought forward to reform the OMB. We need to come together, vote for it, pass the member from Trinity-Spadina's bill, and let's get on with having a vibrant, better, not ordinary city of Toronto, but an extraordinary city of Toronto.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please. I know members are all strolling back into the chamber, but as you do, there are about 20 conversations—

Mr. Mike Colle: Throw them all out.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask you to try and give the Speaker a little bit of respect.

The member for Trinity-Spadina, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Two minutes plus, Speaker. The clock was running, remember?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): And 12 seconds.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: All right.

I just want to say I appreciate the comments made by the Minister of Transportation, because I thought he was dead-on, and he was speaking to my bill, in fact.

I want to say to the other two ministers: They were arguing in a way that doesn't support my bill. I believe that we can reform the OMB and it should be reformed. My sense is most Liberals don't want to abolish it the way the member from Eglinton-Lawrence wanted to, but reform must happen—

Mr. Mike Colle: That's right; they voted against it when I put it forward.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Michael, please.

Reform must happen. It is not incompatible with my bill. My bill says Toronto wants to be free of the OMB. They want to be exempt from the oversight of the OMB. These two issues are not incompatible.

The city of Toronto is unique; it has its own act. You gave them fiscal powers to be able to tax whatever the heck they wanted. They are able to do whatever they believe they should be doing, and having planning powers is something that I believe we should give the city of Toronto, if that's what they want. And that's what they want. If Mississauga wants to have the same power, I say, God bless. Let's do it right away. If Ottawa wants to do it, I say, God bless. Let's do it right away. If all of the major cities in Ontario want this, I think that's okay.

At the same time, let's reform the OMB, which is what the Premier wants, which is what she wanted to do when she was a minister, and nothing has happened. Charles Sousa was saying just about six months ago that whatever changes you were expecting to happen at the OMB, they're coming today. They're not coming. They're still not coming.

The city of Toronto is 179 years old. It is an adult. It is mature. The time has come for the city of Toronto to be able to govern itself over planning. They do have an official plan, in spite of what the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs was saying earlier. They want to be able to be in charge of that official plan. Let's do it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for private members' public business has expired.

GASOLINE TAX FAIRNESS FOR ALL ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ POUR TOUS À L'ÉGARD DE LA TAXE SUR L'ESSENCE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 4, standing in the name of Mr. Yakabuski. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some nos.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will deal with the vote at the end of regular business.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Fife has moved second reading of Bill 24. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."
I believe the ayes have it.

We'll take the vote at the end of regular business.

RESPECT FOR MUNICIPALITIES ACT (CITY OF TORONTO), 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE RESPECT DES MUNICIPALITÉS (CITÉ DE TORONTO)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Marchese has moved second reading of Bill 20. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some nos.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On division.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Okay, we'll take the vote. Let's go back to the beginning.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Second reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Carried on division. Okay.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Marchese?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The finance committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the finance committee. Agreed? Agreed.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1631 to 1636.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can members please take their seats.

Since we have all of the members in the House—or I should say the majority of the members in the House—I would ask you to indulge with me in thanking the pages, because today is their last day.

Applause.

GASOLINE TAX FAIRNESS FOR ALL ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ POUR TOUS À L'ÉGARD DE LA TAXE SUR L'ESSENCE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on Mr. Yakabuski's bill. Mr. Yakabuski has moved second reading of Bill 3. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Campbell, Sarah
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank

Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Mantha, Michael
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanhof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob

Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
MacCharles, Tracy
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John

Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 40; the nays are 25.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Please sit down.

Mr. Yakabuski?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would ask that the bill be sent—

Mr. Jim Wilson: Government agencies.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I ask that the bill be referred to the committee on government agencies, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Yakabuski has requested that the bill be referred to government agencies. Agreed? Agreed.

Please open the doors for 30 seconds, and we'll take the next vote.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Fife has moved second reading of Bill 24. All those in favour, please stand and remain standing.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gélinas, France	Murray, Glen R.
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Horwath, Andrea	Naqvi, Yasir
Bailey, Robert	Jaczek, Helena	Natyshak, Taras
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Nicholls, Rick
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Pettapiece, Randy
Campbell, Sarah	MacCharles, Tracy	Piruzza, Teresa
Cansfield, Donna H.	Mantha, Michael	Prue, Michael
Chan, Michael	Marchese, Rosario	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Schein, Jonah
Colle, Mike	McDonnell, Jim	Singh, Jagmeet
Coteau, Michael	McKenna, Jane	Tabuns, Peter
Del Duca, Steven	McMeekin, Ted	Taylor, Monique
DiNovo, Cheri	McNaughton, Monte	Vanthof, John
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Wong, Soo
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Norm	Yurek, Jeff
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Miller, Paul	Zimmer, David
Forster, Cindy	Milloy, John	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Rod	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Scott, Laurie
Delaney, Bob	Leone, Rob	Shurman, Peter
Dickson, Joe	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Elliott, Christine	Milligan, Rob E.	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Moridi, Reza	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Harris, Michael	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 50; the nays are 23.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, I wish to refer Bill 24 to the Standing Committee on Finance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that it be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance. Agreed? Agreed.

The time for private members' public business is finished. Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that it be adjourned? Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until Monday at 10:30 a.m.

Interjections: No.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Oh, the following week. What's the date?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): March 11.

Interjections: March 18.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): March 18.

The House adjourned at 1646.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Millroy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	London West / London-Ouest	
Vacant	Windsor-Tecumseh	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Grant Crack, Kim Craiton
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Bill Mauro
Taras Natyshak, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Vacant
Dipika Damerla, Steven Del Duca
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Monte McNaughton
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Bas Balkissoon, Rick Bartolucci
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Mike Colle, Rosario Marchese
Laurie Scott, Todd Smith
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day (pro tem.)

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Laura Albanese, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Joe Dickson, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Paul Miller
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Teresa J. Armstrong
Steven Del Duca, Bob Delaney
Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Gilles Bisson
Steve Clark, Mike Colle
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Bill Mauro
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Dipika Damerla
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Margarett R. Best, Vic Dhillon
Joe Dickson, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Margarett R. Best
Ted Chudleigh, Cheri DiNovo
Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)

Monday 18 March 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

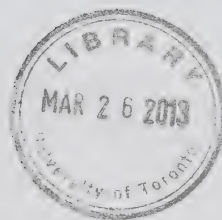
Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Journal
des débats
(Hansard)

Lundi 18 mars 2013

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 18 March 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 18 mars 2013

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} France Gélinas: My guests are just going through the metal detector as we speak, but I will introduce them just in case I miss them altogether: Madame Marie-Josée Bergeron, who is mother to page Magalie Malette; and Madame Léanne Génier-Bédard, who is mother to page Nicolas Bédard, from Nickel Belt and Sudbury. Welcome to Queen's Park—they are just on their way.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'd like to introduce my special assistant from Orléans, Shawn Kalbhenn, who is in the gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please welcome, from the 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments and Deputy Premier—today we have the Honourable George Smitherman, who is hosting a visiting delegation from Honam, an economic development region in South Korea. From the Honam delegation, please welcome Dr. Dong Kim, Mr. June Hang Lee and Mr. Calvin Yi. Welcome to Ontario.

With the House's approval and indulgence, we have a very special group with us today in the House. As all members will recall, a devastating tsunami struck north-eastern Japan on March 11, 2011. In concert with the international community, Canada and Ontario responded with emergency, financial and material aid. As a result, Ambassador Ishikawa of Japan was granted the very rare privilege of addressing the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on April 17, 2011, to offer thanks to the citizens of Ontario for their support.

As part of a larger reconstruction effort, the government of Japan established a student exchange program, Kizuna, which means "bonds of friendship," in which they invited high school students to visit Japan, tour the affected areas, learn first-hand from survivors and rebuilders, and develop ties with Japanese youth.

We have with us here today, in the Speaker's and the visitors' galleries, students from the Japanese Seiwa Gakuen high school of Japan and students from Malvern Collegiate Institute of Toronto. This group is accompanied by the consul general of Japan, Mr. Eiji Yamamoto. Please join me in welcoming our wonderful and special guests.

Thank you for your indulgence. I just wanted to remind you that that doesn't give anyone else permission

to give an essay before you introduce your guests—only the Speaker.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is for the Premier. Why did your throne speech not mention anything about getting public sector pension costs under control?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm happy to answer the Leader of the Opposition's question, but just for one second, I would like to acknowledge that our friend, my friend, a great friend of publicly funded education, Irene Atkinson, a trustee with the Toronto District School Board, is under medical care at the moment. She's one of the strongest fighters I've ever met, but she's fighting for her own life right now, and I just want to say that my prayers and, I believe, the prayers of all of us are with her and her family. Irene would never shy away from a difficult question; I will just say that.

Mr. Speaker, we are working to modernize the pension policy framework, and we're playing a leading role, in fact, in a national discussion around pensions. As you know, Mr. Speaker, we are right now in the process of finalizing arrangements with our public sector partners on pension viability.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here's the problem, Speaker: The gold standard public sector pensions are the ticking time bomb in our finances. Premier, you've rejected any more legislative wage freezes. When I asked you directly about which Dalton McGuinty program you would eliminate or postpone, the answer was "none," and your throne speech did not even mention wrestling down public sector pension costs. The unfunded liability between what's been promised to government workers and what can be afforded is about \$100 billion. That means \$100 billion that won't go into hospitals, won't go into classrooms, won't go into highway infrastructure.

Premier, can you specifically tell us what you're going to do to help reduce or eliminate the \$100 billion in unfunded liability, or do you plan to go to taxpayers or do you plan to take it out of hospitals and classrooms?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This is an issue that we've tackled head-on. Our government has recently reached agreements with three public sector plans that freeze contribution rates for five years, Mr. Speaker. The agree-

ments ensure that pension plans don't add to employer and taxpayer costs when addressing a new funding shortfall, and in fact will mean cost avoidance of a billion and a half dollars over three years. From our perspective, that's exactly what needed to be done. We're tackling it. We're working with our public sector partners, and we are making sure that those dollars are saved over the coming years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: This is precisely the point I'm making, Premier. You've agreed you're not going to increase contribution rates any more, but that does not address the unfunded liability. For example, a teacher could retire on a pension at 55 years of age and collect 70% of their best five years, meaning the pension would be about \$60,000 to \$65,000. That's \$15,000 higher than the average taxpayer makes in the province of Ontario. So nothing you're doing is going to address the fact that people will be earning more in retirement and living longer in retirement than they did to contribute to the system.

So I'll ask the Premier back: Specifically when it comes to teachers, do you agree we should raise the retirement age? Should we reduce benefits? How exactly are you going to pay for that difference?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the underlying issue for the Leader of the Opposition is that he's interested in driving a wedge between people who have pensions, and people who don't have pensions—people who have worked for years to negotiate their pensions.

1040

Our position is that we need to make sure that pensions are viable, but more than that, that everyone across the province has the ability to retire and have the kinds of supports they need, which is why my predecessor led a national discussion on pension reform. We are part of that discussion nationally, Mr. Speaker. We know there are changes that need to be made, and here in Ontario we're working to make sure that pension plans are viable.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: To be very direct about it, it's you who have created this wedge. As education minister, you signed on to 12.5% wage increases for teachers—they've gone up 25% to 30% under the Liberal government—and that means pension payouts have increased as well, while the 80% of people who are not on the government payroll have had their wages frozen; they've gone backwards and been asked to pay more and more taxes. This actually means there are 11,000 workers today who are making about \$140,000 or more a year. That means they'll retire with guaranteed pensions of \$100,000 a year, Premier.

When 75% of people in the private sector have no registered pension whatsoever, do you think it's fair for them to continue to bail out gold standard public sector pensions that are just not affordable in 2013?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think what is fair is that we, as a government, and, I would suggest, this whole Legislature work together to figure out how we make sure that all of the people living in this province, all of the people who are working for their families have the prospect of a retirement that is comfortable, that they're able to provide for themselves and their families. I think that's the conversation we should be having.

What's happening here is that the Leader of the Opposition is trying to create that rift between people who have worked for years, who have been part of a federation that have worked with their employees and have bargained particular benefits—that's a reality. That's what has happened.

Our job is to make sure that everyone in the province can have a healthy, safe and reasonable retirement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Mr. Speaker, I just think this illustrates how the Premier is increasingly out of touch with the reality of those who have to actually pay the bills. I know her first instincts are always "What can we do to appease the government union leaders?" I'm talking about the 80% of taxpayers who are not on the public sector payroll, who are paying more and more in taxes and wouldn't even dream of the gold standard pensions that are just not affordable when you look at the reality of the 21st century.

The Drummond report had eight recommendations. To date, your government has implemented zero of those recommendations when it comes to public sector pensions. For the teacher pension, he recommended increasing the average age of retirement for teachers. He also said, "When faced with unfunded liabilities, reduce benefits rather than increase contribution rates." So, of those two recommendations, increasing the retirement age or reducing benefits, Premier, what do you think is fair and reasonable? Or are you going to take it out of the pockets of taxpayers or out of the budgets of hospitals and classrooms in the province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, the irony is a little thick. It is that member's government that actually created an early retirement option for teachers, Mr. Speaker. They were eager to put that in place.

The larger point is that it is our responsibility as government to make sure that we do everything we can to work with our partners to make sure that pension plans are viable. That's what we've been doing. We've been getting deals, we've been working with them, and we've been making sure that those plans are viable. But the broader issue is to make sure that all the people of Ontario have the prospect of a reasonable retirement. That's why we have been national leaders in the discussion of how to make sure that people can retire in comfort and have a reasonable expectation of their retirement, no matter who they work for, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, the Premier seems to be out of touch with the reality of public sector haves and pri-

vate sector have-nots when it comes to pensions, including the gold standard pension for government workers. If unions for steel, mining and transportation have all agreed to a hybrid pension, where new workers get a less generous pension plan, why don't we do the same for government workers in our province? Speaker, isn't that a fair and reasonable proposition?

To the teachers' pension plan: The teachers' pension plan now is paying out \$2 billion more a year in benefits than it collects in revenues. That's simply not sustainable, so I'll ask you again: Premier, are you going to take that out of benefits, are you going to raise the retirement age, or is your plan to take that \$2 billion a year out of the pockets of private sector taxpayers or hospitals and classrooms? Tell me where that \$2 billion a year is going to come from.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said, we have signed agreements—in fact, we signed an agreement with the Ontario Teachers' Federation last week, Mr. Speaker. The contribution rates—they'll go down. So we are going to avoid costs of \$1.5 billion over the next three years.

I would think that that's something that the Leader of the Opposition should celebrate, Mr. Speaker. I would think it's exactly the kind of change that he would like to see. But instead, what he is doing, in my opinion, is he's standing up and he's working to drive a wedge to increase the rift between people who work in one part of the economy and people who work in another part of the economy.

My job, our job, is to make sure that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Our job is to make sure that people who live in Ontario, no matter where they work—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, do not start.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —have the opportunity to have a reasonable retirement, to be able to look after their families and to live in some comfort when they leave their work.

CASINOS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats would also like to express our heartfelt concern over the accident that happened to Irene Atkinson over the weekend. We obviously extend our thoughts and our prayers to her and hope that she recovers from her situation.

My question, Speaker, is to the Premier. Does the Premier think Ontario will be better off if Toronto has a casino?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been very clear that municipalities should have the right and the opportunity to decide whether they want to have a casino in their jurisdiction. That is our position, Mr. Speaker, and that is the position that we will continue to take.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier pretends she doesn't have a stake in the casino game, Speaker, but every day there's a new story of the government scrambling to stack the deck. We know there are a lot of lobbyists with a lot of money pushing casinos at the backrooms of Queen's Park here, but in rural Ontario and municipalities across the province, people are getting tired of the OLG pressure tactics. Now, mayors that had been on board are raising serious questions about sweetheart deals for Toronto.

Does the Premier think this is building a stronger Ontario, or is she ready to admit that it's time to turn down the heat on the hot mess that the OLG privatization is creating?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that the issue that the leader of the third party is addressing is the issue around the formula that's being used across the province. I've been very clear that the formula is the same across the province. The magnitudes of the particular projects are different, so depending on whether it is in a small town or a large urban centre, the formula will be the same, but the actual revenues are different. But there are no special deals, and municipalities will be able to choose whether they want a casino or not.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier seems to be in a rush to get casinos into cities and towns before everyday families have their say. The Premier wants municipalities to have the say, but she's afraid to let the people living in them speak through referenda.

When the Premier promised more conversation, people assumed she meant something more than the backroom meetings organized by well-connected Liberal lobbyists. Is the Premier ready to back away from the OLG's private casino push and insist that casinos shouldn't be built unless people have had a chance to vote for them?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the leader of the third party knows that every municipality is required to have a consultation. When we talk about municipalities and we talk about the people who represent them, those, to my mind, are one and the same thing. So a municipality needs to decide, and I think municipalities have the authority and have the capacity to decide what kind of consultation to do in their constituencies. Until that consultation is done and until those decisions are made, Mr. Speaker, there will be no—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

There are two things happening here that still continue to bother me, and I'll still tell you to stop doing it, and that is, when the answer is being given, you cannot continue a dialogue with someone else over there; and when somebody is speaking on this side, the same thing is happening where we're getting comments. That helps bring the tone down.

1050

The second thing is, I have some people who are not even in their seats heckling right as soon as the answer starts—before it even starts. So let's stop, please.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just to say, Mr. Speaker, that I have a lot of faith in our municipalities to work with their constituencies, to work with the people in their constituencies, to make these decisions.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Placing a bet on casinos seems like a risky way to balance the books. If the government is truly interested in a balanced approach, New Democrats have laid one out, starting with the closing of corporate tax loopholes that will ultimately save the treasury over \$1 billion a year.

My question is a simple one, Speaker: Is the Premier ready to do that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to say that I appreciate the opportunity to have met with both the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party over the last week. I know that the leader of the third party is aware that all of the issues that she has raised are things that we are looking at, that we're interested in working with her on. Likewise, there are some issues that I put forward to the Leader of the Opposition that I thought we could work together on. So this issue of compliance and the opportunity to look at where there might be changes in the tax system, we're looking at those, and as I say, I look forward to continuing to have a discussion with the leader of the third party on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last week we learned that the finance minister had written his federal counterpart about tightening corporate tax compliance. That's one step toward balancing the books, but it's a baby step. We've identified measures that will save \$1.3 billion annually, and thus far the government has only followed up on the one that saves the least amount of money.

Can the Premier assure us that we're going to see some real action in the coming budget on corporate tax loopholes being closed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Indeed we are. We're undergoing consultations now right across the province. We appreciate the contributions made by the NDP in regard to some of these recommendations. We also appreciate some of the notes that the Conservatives have brought forward. We will do everything in our power to try to maximize the results from those consultations so that the benefit of our budget will be felt throughout the province. We appreciate what's being put forward, and we also do want to cut any tax loopholes that exist.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I'm kind of concerned. When it comes to implementing the casino

schemes of well-connected insiders, the Premier seems ready to move heaven and earth. But when it comes to taking simple steps that will help us take a balanced approach to balancing the books, the Premier wants a little more conversation.

Is the Premier ready to admit that there are better ways to balance the books than ramming casinos into communities that don't want them and to start taking real steps to close corporate tax loopholes in this upcoming budget?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be clear. Around the casinos issue, we have two steps. One is, are the cities or the municipalities interested in having that discussion? That's what they have to decide first off, and depending upon that we'll then enter deliberations over what—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —next, and they still have the opportunity to even say no again should they wish. There is a two-stage approach, and we do want to encourage that discussion. I think that is what's most important.

When it comes to decisions around the budget, I welcome your input, because that's the way we're going to be able to put a budget that's balanced and that recognizes the sensitive recovery we have in our economy. We need to look at this in a very prudent way. We have a fiscal matter before us: We need to balance our books by 2017-18. We also have an economic reality. We want to promote growth. We want to enable us to have even a better future going forward. That's what this budget's going to be all about in the coming months.

CASINOS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Premier. Premier, as you know, over the weekend, serious questions have been raised since it came out that Toronto was being offered a special deal in conjunction with your government's ongoing casino drive. Throughout the weekend, I heard from a number of municipal officials—including those in Ottawa, Windsor and Niagara Falls—and industry stakeholders and residents expressing objections to this idea that a sweetheart deal has been offered to the city of Toronto. Premier, it's not right to pit one community against another.

My question this morning is this: Is the OLG's municipality contribution agreement a standard agreement, or do the terms vary between municipalities? Will you reveal the specific formula being used to calculate the hosting fee for the city of Toronto and all other municipalities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Premier has made it very clear in her statement last week that it's going to be a consistent approach between all municipalities. We recognize that the scope and breadth of the casino, resort and convention centre that is being proposed in Toronto is going to be much grander and much bigger than in the other municipalities. But the bottom line is the formula

will be consistent, and the decision will be, ultimately, that of the municipality. We'll let them deliberate and make that decision first before we have further discussions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Your own OLG officials have said that Toronto would rake in anywhere from \$50 million to \$100 million in casino hosting fees, and Mayor Ford has said he would expect a hosting fee of up to \$168 million. The CEO for the OLG said that they are promising Toronto higher hosting fees based on the amount of capital invested and the economic benefits it may generate. Unfortunately, every other municipality in this province receives host community fees based solely on a percentage of net slot revenues.

Given these glaring inconsistencies between the OLG and you, my question to you is very simple: In order to confirm that no special deals are being offered to your hometown, will you release the formula used to calculate host fees? Will you stand in your place and guarantee that all municipalities will be treated the same throughout this province?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me be clear: There is no special deal being made with Toronto versus any other municipalities in the province. What is different, however, is the contributions being made by the proponents for the city of Toronto and the scope and depth of that project. It is going to be a major development that is being proposed, including infrastructure. It is a different contribution being made by the proponents, and that will have an impact on the city going forward. But that decision will be ultimately made by the municipality, and that's what's going to work. The degree and the fairness between the municipalities is consistent right through the formula.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, I'm trying to help you. Accept my help.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The second thing is, he would like to be in his own seat, which is the tradition, to even get to the point where I can help you. I would really appreciate that.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll do that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment will not engage in escalating.

Now that you're in your spot, I'm going to help you even more, just in case you think that that's the signal to carry on.

New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you for your intervention, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Premier. Premier, in less than two weeks, your government will end the Slots At Race-

tracks Program partnership, which will ensure the demise of the horse racing industry. To make things worse, your government has adopted a divide-and-conquer approach by forcing deals with certain tracks and leaving others to perish.

Will the Premier freeze the cancellation of the SAR partnership until the government engages the industry in a real consultation process?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said here and I have said elsewhere around the province that there will be horse racing in Ontario this year and that we're working to find a way forward to have a long-term sustainability plan for horse racing in the province. It's very important to us that that happen.

It's also important to us—coming out of the recommendations of the transition panel—that we have an integrated industry: that horse racing be part of the larger gaming industry. That was a recommendation by the panel. The fact is that there was not sustainability built into the model as it existed.

This was not the first time that this issue has been raised; it was raised in 2008 that there needed to be a right-sizing of the industry. That's what's happening. We're working to get agreements with tracks. We understand that it will be a smaller industry, but we want it to be sustainable well into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Premier, your government seems to be relying on the Tories' white paper to privatize gaming and clearly doesn't care about the thousands of jobs that will be lost in rural Ontario. The industry has seen catastrophic results already. The cancellation of the SAR partnership caused a 50% reduction in sales at last year's yearling auction and crippled the breeding industry. There are only two weeks left to make this right. Will the Premier stop the cancellation of the SAR partnership while it works with industry to come up with a real plan to preserve jobs in rural Ontario?

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm actually operating on the recommendations of Elmer Buchanan, John Wilkinson and John Snobelen, who worked together to come up with a model that would be sustainable.

The fact is that the model as it existed was called unaccountable, un-transparent. It was bloated. That is what the panel said about the model that had been in place. It had to change. There had to be some sustainability that would allow the horse racing industry to carry forward beyond the next year or so, so that's what we've been working on.

The panel found—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings and the member from Huron–Bruce, come to order, please.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Here's what the panel said: "The panel believes the industry should get back to basics by creating a stronger link between the racing product and consumer demand."

That's what we're trying to do. That's the work that we're doing with the racetracks. We want the industry to be sustainable and, if I may say, we're on track to make it so.

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Minister, one of Ontario's rising employment stars, especially in the western GTA, is the aerospace sector. Honeywell in Erin Mills makes aviation electronics; MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates makes space vehicle parts in Brampton; Spar Aerospace makes navigation guidance and aeronautical systems; and Goodrich makes landing gear in Oakville.

One of our Mississauga stars is Cyclone Manufacturing in Meadowvale, which makes jet airframe parts; and recently Sumitomo Precision Products, also in Meadowvale, made an exciting announcement which will help skilled Ontarians build profitable careers and profitable aerospace products for export.

Minister, please expand on how the high-value, high-skills aerospace industry has found a home in Ontario in the last 10 years.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville. I know that he and I are so proud of the contribution that Ontario's aerospace industry makes to this province.

Frankly, I have to say that a couple of weeks ago, when I was out in Mississauga and visiting for the grand opening of Sumitomo—a Japanese manufacturing facility which is based in Mississauga, which is manufacturing landing gear—I was so impressed, not only by their contribution but by the hundreds of people who were there that same day to honour the opening of this facility that represented the aerospace industry in this province.

In fact, across Canada, everybody knows that we have a very strong industry in aerospace, but 28%—nearly a third of that industry—is here in Ontario. It provides jobs for 22,000 Ontarians, generating over \$6 billion in annual revenue to this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, the aerospace sector does not merely employ thousands in Ontario; it adds billions of dollars to our province's economy each year. Made-in-Ontario components are part of nearly every aircraft flying today.

In western Mississauga, 2013 has given us two major new aerospace investments to celebrate: first, the agreement by Taiwan-based AIDC to partner with Cyclone Manufacturing to produce tail assemblies for the Bombardier Challenger series of jets; and just recently, the major announcement you mentioned by Sumitomo Precision Products, which is also located in Meadowvale, which is growing as the heart of Mississauga's aerospace sector.

Meadowvale's expanding aerospace sector means opportunity for our technical and engineering graduates. Would the minister elaborate on how Ontario is working

with the aerospace industry to build careers, opportunity and profitable world-class businesses right here in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: In fact, Ontario is home to 14 of the world's top aerospace firms. That's pretty remarkable, Mr. Speaker.

I have to say that in order to continue to attract this important investment, we need to be at the table, and we need to have competitive incentives to make sure that we attract these important investments.

In fact, in the last seven years our government has invested nearly \$85 million into our aerospace industry, most recently including Sumitomo Precision Products in the member's riding of Mississauga—Streetsville. It was a \$3-million loan that supported a \$10-million project that's creating 50 new jobs.

Sumitomo is going to be manufacturing landing gear in this province. Many of my colleagues, I'm sure, don't know that 60% of the large commercial aircraft in the world have landing gear manufactured or assembled here in Ontario.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Speaker, last week the justice committee heard from professional engineer—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Let me repeat that for the member from Mississauga—Streetsville: professional engineer Bruce Sharp, a 25-year expert in his field.

His independent analysis of your government's decision to cancel the gas plants is at least \$828 million, more than three times your government's stated figure.

Following Mr. Sharp's testimony, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville refused to confirm the \$40 million for Oakville that the government insists is the cost. So, Speaker, someone is not being forthright here.

I say to the Premier, tell us now, because we know that you know: What is the real cost of cancelling Oakville?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we have a legislative committee that is looking into these issues. There are a number of witnesses who are coming forward, such as the former Speaker of the Parliament of Canada, for example, who gave evidence and information that in his opinion there was no contempt here in any way, shape or form. We now have another witness who's coming forward, giving a calculation, making certain assumptions on the cost of the power plant.

There will be other witnesses coming forward, so I would urge the members opposite to respect the committee, to respect the fact that there will be additional witnesses coming forward, and to recognize the accountability of the committee—that it's going to have to make a decision at the end of all of this evidence. I encourage the critic opposite to be patient.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, Ontarians want you to stop hiding behind technicalities, legalities, procedure and spin.

Mr. Sharp echoed that sentiment in the committee last week. When I asked him what would make his analysis more complete, he said, "a transparent and spin-free disclosure of" information. I asked him if he thinks the government has provided that, and his answer was simple: "No." Mr. Sharp doesn't feel you've released all the documents to get an accurate picture of the true cost of the Oakville and Mississauga cancellations. Speaker, quite frankly, neither do we.

Premier, you've had over a month now to live up to your promise of getting to the bottom of this scandal and turning over all of the documents. Your failure to do so can lead to only one question: What else are you hiding?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Premier has been very clear, open and transparent. When she became Premier of this province, she made a commitment to the opposition, she made a commitment to the public, that it would be fully, completely transparent. In fact, it was the Premier whose initiative enlarged the mandate of the committee so that they can make further investigations on a broader range of issues.

We also have been very transparent in making the CEO and the chair of the Ontario Power Authority available to the media for an unlimited period of time. They underwent tremendous cross-examination, and they indicated clearly that there was no political control over their timing or the nature of the release of documents.

Mr. Speaker, we've been open, transparent and clear, and they just don't want to accept it.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Your failure to actually answer the question from the opposition speaks volumes. Your party has maintained that it cost \$40 million to cancel the Oakville gas plant. We had very clear testimony last week that that was not a credible number.

Premier, will you actually speak to the question and admit that \$40 million is not a credible figure for the Oakville gas plant cancellation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the government House leader.

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: It's great to be back, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. John Milloy: The question from the member from the New Democratic Party began by referencing the question from the member from Nipissing. I agree with one thing that the member from Nipissing said, which is that it's about time we look at this without spin, without the type of rhetoric we've seen coming from that side.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased, on this side of the Legislature, that the Auditor General is looking into the Mississauga plant, and that is why the Pre-

mier proactively asked the Auditor General to look into the Oakville plant.

1110

Do you know what Bruce Sharp, the gentleman who's being referred to by both parties, had to say to the Financial Post? This is what he had to say: "The situation begs for these numbers to be confirmed and publicized. I can think of no better provider of this service than Ontario Auditor General Jim McCarter and his staff."

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General is looking into—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Premier, your ongoing deflection in this matter continues to speak very, very loudly.

I had the opportunity to be here when Dwight Duncan refused to answer questions about the shutdown of coal plants. That led to the media's correct assumption that, in fact, he was backing off on that number.

Your predecessor said that the \$40 million was the number, that it had been nailed. We've seen clear evidence that, in fact, that figure was not credible, not correct.

Premier, will you answer the question? Do you stand by that \$40-million figure for the cancellation of the gas plant done by your party?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, the opposition can't take yes for an answer. The fact of the matter is that the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature, is looking into the matter.

But again, what I find strange is that when the member stands up, he fails to remind the House that it was his party that opposed these gas plants. Mr. Speaker, here are some good quotes.

The member from Toronto-Danforth, September 26, 2011, Inside Toronto: "We wouldn't build it."

Etobicoke-Lakeshore NDP candidate Dionne Coley also pledged to fight the plant, she told Torstar News Service on September 16.

"Local NDP candidate, Anju Sikka, soon issued statements concurring with the new Liberal cancellation"—the National Post, September 29, 2011.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition parties had the same position as the government on the cancellation of the gas plant. It's about time they came clean on why they were in favour of that cancellation and the type of costing behind their decision.

GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of the Environment.

Engaging our communities and providing our communities with an opportunity to take action to restore and protect our Great Lakes is an important part of improving the health of our Great Lakes. I understand that the Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund could help fund small-scale local community action to restore and protect the Great Lakes.

Speaker, through you, I would like to ask the minister for further details on this program.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'll be delighted to provide that information for that excellent question. The Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund is a \$1.5-million funding program that offers non-profit groups, such as service clubs, the opportunity to finance activities to support local community activities that restore and protect the Great Lakes in the St. Lawrence River basin. Funding has also been made available to First Nations and Metis communities and organizations in Ontario. The funds are distributed through modest grants, valued up to \$25,000 per project, for actions that contribute to cleaning up the Great Lakes one small step at a time.

On March 6, I was at the Royal Ontario Museum with the 9th Pickering Scout troop, who used funding from this program to learn environmental stewardship practices. Together, we were happy to announce the next round of projects that will be funded through the Great Lakes community fund.

These goals will help us achieve our Great Lakes goals. We want all Ontarians to become Great Lakes guardians so we can continue to enjoy the Great Lakes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's good to hear about the community involvement to protect our Great Lakes. This includes the work of the 9th Pickering Scout troop that my minister mentioned. I know that it is important that our government continues taking action to protect our lakes and restore them.

I understand that the minister received many great ideas from individuals and communities who are eager to take action to protect the Great Lakes. Speaker, through you, could the minister elaborate more to the House on the types of projects that received funding for that in the very first round?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First, I would like to thank the applicants who have demonstrated their concern and their enthusiasm for protecting the Great Lakes and who have applied for the program.

To date, through the first round, the ministry has funded over 80 projects across the province. We helped a grassroots community group with landowners and volunteers to reduce the impacts of runoff erosion and habitat loss in the Gananogue River. The Simcoe and District Fish and Game Club received support to improve water quality through bank naturalization. And we've funded the Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association's project to monitor and restore streams flowing into Lake Huron and Georgian Bay.

There are many more great initiatives happening across the province, over 80 of them. I want to congratulate all of those applicants who have received funding and encourage those with an interest in restoring and protecting our Great Lakes to apply in the next few months.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is to the Premier. Your party is showing two polar opposite approaches to your gas plant scandal. While the Premier publicly states her willingness for openness and transparency, she sends out

her minions to carry out attacks on opposition members, energy experts and anyone who's looking to get to the bottom of the \$828-million gas plant scandal.

The facts are clear: The \$40-million number for Oakville is simply a fairy tale. It has been discredited. Yet your Liberal Party henchmen have no time for facts, openness or transparency when you, Premier, feel their time is better spent launching mean-spirited and vindictive attacks on Ontarians.

Premier, you're either saying one thing in public and another thing behind closed doors, or you've lost all control of your caucus, who continue to resort to attacks on Ontarians who seek the truth. So which is it, Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, let's have a little bit of transparency from the opposition. First they promised to cancel the gas plant, and then, when we fulfilled their promise, they called it a scandal. Then the member said that a judicial inquiry was too expensive, and the member from Nipissing held a press conference calling for it. Then we came forward with the idea of a select committee. Instead, they went after a mean-spirited, vengeful motion against a former member of this Legislature. Then we went in front of that committee and we offered to provide them with all government documents related to the gas plant, far beyond anything that they had asked. And you know what? To the shock of myself and I think everyone on this side of the Legislature, they raised their hands and voted against it.

In terms of transparency, I think the opposition has some explaining to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: I think the government House leader fails to remember that he decided to build the plant. It takes a decision to build a plant before a decision to cancel it.

Premier, the cancelled plant will cost 15 times more than your government had originally stated, and you're sticking to that number, which is completely inexcusable. If I ran a business and told my customers that their product, at checkout, would be 15 times more than the price tag, I wouldn't be in business for very long. But this government instead refuses to accept the fact that this \$828-million figure means their reason for hiding the truth is open to the public. They prorogued because of this cost. They failed to release documents because of this cost. They threw their energy minister to the wolves because of this cost. The government is intent on standing by this expensive, insulting charade at any cost.

So, Premier, will you finally admit that the reason for your government's decision to obstruct the work of this House is because you're trying to cover up the true cost of a politically motivated decision?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Rob Leone: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I can just read into the record again a quote from Mr. Bruce Sharp, the witness that the member referenced, and I quote what he told the Financial Post: "The situation begs for these numbers"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member for Leeds–Grenville is on the edge, and I would expect him to treat all members honourably in this House.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: He said, "The situation begs for these numbers to be confirmed and publicized. I can think of no better provider of this service than Ontario Auditor General Jim McCarter and his staff."

But let's talk about some of the other witnesses in front of the committee, like former House Speaker Peter Milliken. Perhaps the honourable member saw this article in the Toronto Star:

"Tory Witness Bolsters Liberals' Case to Clear Chris Bentley of Wrongdoing

"A Progressive Conservative gambit appeared to backfire on the first day of witness testimony at the legislative committee....

"Former federal Speaker Peter Milliken, who the Tories called to bolster their case that then-energy minister Chris Bentley was in contempt of the Legislature last year for withholding documents, torpedoed that argument."

"I don't know why there would have been a breach. I don't understand that," Milliken told the justice committee"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

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LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Long-term care is in a sorry state in Windsor—maybe that's the best kept secret that we've been hearing so much about. But it's no secret that the elderly people who are stuck in local hospitals waiting for long-term-care beds were promised years ago by this government that this situation would be fixed, and it's no secret to a veteran doctor and former chief of surgery at Windsor Western and Windsor Regional hospitals. When Dr. David Wonham addressed pre-budget hearings in Windsor last week, he said the situation amounts to "abuse."

When will this government live up to its commitments and finally fix long-term care in Windsor?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I believe the leader of the third party does know that the long-awaited long-term-care home that was to have been built on the Hotel-Dieu Grace site is now under construction. It took longer than anyone wanted it to, but it's very important to the people of Windsor and area that that home be built. I'm very pleased that the Schlegel

family has stepped up and is building what will be a wonderful new long-term-care home in Windsor.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, when this government botched the Grace site long-term-care redevelopment, it's the frail and elderly in Windsor who paid the price, and so did Windsor hospitals, which are teetering on crisis mode and operating well beyond their capacity. People who belong in long-term-care beds are stuck waiting in hospital as patients pile up in the gurneys and hallways. Dr. Wonham called the situation "pathetic," and likened the scene in Windsor hospitals to "a war zone MASH unit."

The Premier's solution is to fire nurses, cut hospital beds and tell families to hurry up and wait. When will this government relieve the pressure on Windsor hospitals and make long-term care a real priority?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think it's incumbent upon the leader of any party in this House to actually understand the issues before they make such claims. Funding at Windsor Regional Hospital has increased dramatically since we have been in office. In fact, the increase in their budget is \$100 million.

We are increasing capacity in long-term care, and we are, most importantly increasing capacity for home care. We are well on our way now in the transformation of our health care system. We are investing more in home care so that we can get people the care they need at home, which is where they want to be. It's better for people and it's better for our health care system.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, when one thinks of the multi-billion dollar mining industry in Ontario, one automatically thinks of the positive effects for the north—and indeed that is true. Speaker, I was in Timmins over the March break to see first-hand the importance of the mining industry. I was there for pre-budget hearings.

But that said, the north is not the only part of Ontario that benefits from mining. In fact, in my own hometown of Mississauga, there are 30 mining supply and service companies. This makes Mississauga the leading destination in all of Ontario for mining supplies and service companies to do business. As the amount of mining business conducted in Mississauga and all over the GTA grows, it highlights the fact that the mining industry is important to all parts of the province.

Will the minister please inform the House how the mining industry is having a positive impact on cities from Mississauga to Thunder Bay?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It's an amazing story. Thanks to the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville for the question because you're quite right to highlight the extraordinarily positive impact of mining in all regions of the province. Certainly northern Ontario comes to mind, but the mining supply and services sector is remarkable—

between \$5 billion and \$7 billion in mining supplies, and a lot of it in Mississauga.

It's important to note that just a few weeks ago Toronto hosted the world's top convention in global mineral exploration, investment, financing and technology, welcoming 30,000-plus delegates from 125 countries to the Prospectors and Developers Association conference. I was honoured to be there to represent the province. Premier Wynne was there to help us open up the Ontario pavilion and to highlight the advantages of doing business in Ontario.

Bottom line: The mining industry itself creates over 75,000 direct and indirect jobs in Ontario, certainly including the jobs the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville—I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: After listening to the minister, it is clear that he's passionate about the north and the mining industry. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a member of this government, which recognizes the importance of the mining industry in this province. As articulated by the minister, the mining exploration industry is an important contributor to our economy and to job creation in Ontario, which the minister alluded to.

Minister, can you tell us what the government has done over the past 10 years to promote the mining industry right here in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks so much to the member for this great—we certainly recognize the extraordinary positive value of the mining industry to our economy. We've invested over \$120 million in Ontario mineral sector activities to date, and our investments certainly are paying off, Mr. Speaker.

Here's an interesting statistic: In 2003, exploration expenditures in Ontario were \$193 million—a significant sum. In 2011, we surpassed the \$1-billion mark in mineral exploration. That makes Ontario the leading jurisdiction in Canada for exploration. The value of mineral production in 2003 was \$5.7 billion, an impressive figure. In 2011, we reached \$10.7 billion. We are the top province in Canada for mineral production. This is incredible: an increase in jobs, an increase in activity across the sector. Certainly all parts of the province are represented, and certainly we are very proud of our strong support of the mining sector.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Premier. Bruce Sharp is an independent energy expert. In a legislative committee, he testified on the true cost of the Liberals' political decision to cancel the Oakville gas plant. Based on his expertise, we know the true cost is at least 15 times more than what the government told us. In light of this new information, will the Premier finally admit to the sham? Will she finally tell us the true cost of the cancelled gas plant?

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, I can only repeat that the opposition can't take yes for an answer. We have asked the Auditor General—first of all, we're very pleased the Auditor General is looking into the Mississauga plant cancellation. We also, at the urging of the Premier, asked the Auditor General to look into the Oakville plant situation. And Mr. Sharp, who seems to be quoted at great length across the way—this is what he told the Financial Post, Mr. Speaker: "The situation begs for these numbers to be confirmed and publicized. I can think of no better provider of this service than Ontario Auditor General Jim McCarter and his staff."

Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting that when the Conservatives were such great fans of cancelling this plant, that they have refused to provide the Legislature or the committee with their costing and with the policy analysis that went into their decision from the Leader of the Opposition to talk about cancelling the plant.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, that's just not good enough. It's certainly not good enough for my constituents, who are concerned and want to know why this government has a double standard when it comes to power plants in rural Ontario where local communities have been ignored.

Since the finance minister may have to negotiate tax hikes with the NDP to pay for this power plant scandal, we think he must know the true cost: \$40 million is a long way from \$638 million.

Will the minister admit that the true cost of the cancelled Oakville gas plant is at least 15 times more than the \$40 million the Liberals have been claiming?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, I think the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature, will provide good advice to members of this Legislature, as well as the committee that's looking into it. But, Mr. Speaker, where is the Conservative analysis—we'd all like to see that—which led the Leader of the Opposition in that wonderful YouTube video to stand there being questioned by the press, to talk about how he was going to be cancelling the plant, and in the words of, first of all, Richard Brennan of the Toronto Star, when he said, "If you get in, is that done?" Then the Leader of the Opposition responds, "That's right, done." Mr. Brennan then asked "Done, done?" and then the Leader of the Opposition responds to thunderous applause, "Done, done, done."

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So, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to getting the analysis and costing from the Progressive Conservatives about their promise in the last election, which we were happy to fulfil.

WHISTLE-BLOWER PROTECTION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, since June 2012, governance at the Iroquois Falls family health team and Anson General Hospital have been in question. Since

then, the situation has become critical with health care professionals resigning, resulting in shortages in health care and public allegations of fraud and workplace abuse at the family health team and at the hospital.

After my repeated requests, the LHIN announced that an independent review of the governance of these facilities will be conducted, but as a result, the hospital board started legal action against the nine residents who had been the most vocal in bringing these issues forward. The legal action was to intimidate the people who were actually standing up for the community.

Minister, are you prepared to stand by while health care dollars are used to sue and intimidate whistleblowers in Iroquois Falls?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I very much want to thank the member for the question, and I want to thank him for raising this issue with me some time ago. I know he has been in regular contact with members of my staff. He is doing the right thing for his constituents, and I applaud the member's approach for bringing issues forward that matter to his constituents. The member opposite knows that we are dealing with this issue, Speaker, and again I welcome his comments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: The review has started. The minister has spoken about the need to protect whistleblowers, yet in Iroquois Falls at this moment and with the review starting, these nine people who are being sued with public health care dollars—how are they supposed to participate in this review? Because public dollars are being used for the lawyers from the hospital board; public dollars are being used for the lawyers from the LHIN. There's lots of lawyers at the Ministry of Health. The only people who are stuck in this are the nine people who actually stood up for their community.

Minister, are you prepared to protect all whistleblowers in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think it's important to acknowledge that the North East LHIN has commenced the review. They have secured KPMG to review Anson General Hospital governance and management. The review will determine if the allegations of patient and staff abuses are real and the role of management and governance in addressing these allegations. They will also look at the policies and procedures in place to address patient and staff complaints.

This is important work, Speaker. I thank the member opposite for raising this issue. The North East LHIN is actively engaged in a review, and I think we have to let that review happen.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. On my very first day in this chamber as the member representing the wonderful community of Vaughan, I had the privilege of asking the minister a question about the Vaughan

hospital. At that time, I was delighted to hear the minister reaffirm our government's commitment to building the hospital, which is being planned, developed and will be operated by the exceptional team at Mackenzie Health.

Residents in my community were understandably disappointed, therefore, to read media reports in January that the Leader of the Opposition's hand-picked standard-bearer in Vaughan is actually a staunch opponent of our plans to make the Vaughan hospital a reality in partnership with Mackenzie Health. Then, a few days later, the member from Thornhill put out a media release stating that in fact the party opposite does support our approach.

These very public inconsistencies on the part of the official opposition have understandably caused some concern and confusion in my community, so I would like to ask the minister to please provide some additional clarity with respect to the status of the Vaughan hospital project.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Vaughan for this question, and also thank you for his constant and tireless advocacy on bringing a hospital to Vaughan.

Vaughan is a growing and thriving community, and it's one of the fastest-growing in the country. It's important that families in Vaughan have access to the finest-quality care in their community. That's why I'm very pleased to say we are going ahead with a new hospital in Vaughan.

I want to assure residents of Vaughan that we are on track. We first announced the hospital's approval as part of our multi-year infrastructure plan in 2011. More recently, in September 2012, my ministry provided support to Mackenzie Health to proceed with developing a stage-2 planning submission. That plan was submitted to the ministry and the Central Local Health Integration Network a full month ahead of schedule.

As we get closer to the project start date in 2014-15, I know the member from Vaughan will continue to ensure that we maintain our progress and momentum. This is not a—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I thank the minister for that update and for all of her terrific work on behalf of the people of my community. I know that Vaughan residents look forward to us being able to start construction of the Vaughan hospital as soon as we possibly can.

Speaker, hospital projects provide communities like Vaughan with the opportunity to come together and to work in a united way to make them a reality. Moreover, as residents learn more about the services that will be offered at their local state-of-the-art facility, they grow increasingly excited about being able to access top-notch health care closer to home for their children, for their grandchildren and for their aging parents and grandparents.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please provide additional information regarding the kinds of services that are

expected to be provided at the new Mackenzie Vaughan Hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I know that having a full-service hospital is important to the people in Vaughan, and it's hard to imagine why anyone would oppose it. But I can tell you that residents of Vaughan will be getting a full-fledged facility, providing a broad range of core and speciality services.

Among other things, the new Mackenzie Vaughan Hospital will offer patients state-of-the-art emergency services, medical in-patient and intensive care beds, new modern surgical services, operating rooms, advanced diagnostic imaging and specialized outpatient clinics that may include oncology, cardiac care, eye care and diabetes clinics. Some 80% of the rooms at the new hospital will be single-patient rooms. That means superior infection prevention and control. And the hospital will be built with a flexible design that will allow space to adapt over time, as new best practices emerge.

This new hospital will provide a very high level of care and a wide range of services to the people of Vaughan, and I know the member and I and our government will continue to support a new hospital in Vaughan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? There are so many in the House. I believe nobody knows them.

It is now time for statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

POPE FRANCIS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Habemus Papam, Speaker. We have a Pope. Blessed are those who come in the name of the Lord.

On behalf of all members of this Legislature and Ontarians of all faiths, I would like to offer our sincere congratulations to His Holiness Pope Francis. As the 266th Pope, Pope Francis is the first to be a Jesuit, the first to come from the New World and the first to come from the southern hemisphere.

Pope Francis, from Argentina, is known for his passionate concern for the poor and is a man who leads an austere and humble lifestyle. There is tremendous optimism that his reserved character and modest background will resonate with a wide audience and convey a message of humility and evangelical simplicity.

At such a significant time, we look forward to Pope Francis's grace and wisdom in strengthening the faith experience and delivering God's word across the world and bringing together those of all faiths and religions. With courage and wisdom, his word will engage the family, especially our children. It will celebrate our cultural diversity, use our resources wisely and enlighten our spirit.

We look to His Holiness to guide the transformation and direction of the Church and to empower local parishes to identify and undertake key priorities in the community. We hope that his guidance enhances the incredible work already under way in our churches, as well as expanding upon the diverse ways in which our faith communities can strengthen our cities and province.

May his learning grace of life transmit an inspiration for the 1.2 billion Catholics found throughout the world.

As I regularly say, Speaker, may the wisdom found in John 5:8 transmit into a guiding path for all those to our Lord Jesus Christ.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Ms. Catherine Fife: Good afternoon, Speaker. Today, I'd like to bring to the attention of this House a growing and emerging issue that not only affects the riding of Kitchener-Waterloo but every riding in the province that is attempting to manage and direct growth in a fiscally responsible and sustainable manner; an issue that my colleague from Trinity-Spadina raised by way of a private member's bill.

Recently, the Ontario Municipal Board sided with developers against the democratically elected regional government and regional official plan, a plan that was 10 years in the making.

The region, in accordance with the Places to Grow legislation, had consulted with all stakeholders extensively and adopted their growth strategy to be more intensive with less sprawl. The region's plan called for 85 hectares of development. The development community argued that 1,053 hectares were required to meet future growth.

The region made a strong argument for future housing needs, particularly for a growing segment of the population: seniors who will transition out of single-family homes into high-density housing. As a result, many homes in the sprawling communities that exist would be open for new families. This would be new housing choices for families and seniors. Choices drive the market.

Density was also a key discussion in the decision. But the OMB made a clear distinction: Density targets must be planned for but not necessarily met.

My office has received many concerns about this decision, the main question being, "How is it possible that an unelected board can overturn a policy designed by a regional government and supported by a provincial government?"

The region has appealed this decision, as they should. If this decision holds, it will negatively impact the people of Waterloo region by way of increased taxes to support extensive infrastructure, water, sewage, fire, police services and schools. It will negatively impact the province as a whole.

POPE FRANCIS

Mr. Joe Dickson: I thank my good friend from Oshawa for his comments on Pope Francis.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in welcoming our new Pope, Pope Francis.

Pope Francis was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1936. His father was an Italian immigrant railway worker and his mother was a housewife. He has four brothers and sisters.

Prior to becoming Supreme Pontiff, he has been Archbishop of Buenos Aires since 1998 and a cardinal since 2001. Before becoming archbishop, he taught literature, philosophy and theology, as well as psychology. He holds a degree in philosophy from the Catholic University of Argentina and a master's degree in chemistry.

In 1958, at the age of 21, he decided to enter the Society of Jesus and started studying to become a Jesuit priest—a very humble order—making him the first Jesuit pope in our Roman Catholic history.

As the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, he turned down the opportunity to live in the very comfortable archbishop's residence, opting for a spartan apartment where he cooked on his own and he rode the bus.

His Holiness has a deep concern for the poor and working class. He is a consensus seeker, a humble person who favours simplicity over pomp and grandeur. He is the pope of all people. I would like to just say on behalf of the 1.5 billion Catholics in the world that we welcome the new pope, Pope Francis.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to stand for unanimous content, if I may through you, that we stand for 60 seconds in silent reflection and prayer on behalf of our new pope, Pope Francis.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ajax—Pickering has asked for unanimous consent to stand in reflection of our new pope at the end of all statements. Is it agreed? Agreed.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to raise a concern, a concern shared by my colleagues in the PC caucus. It is also a concern shared by thousands of constituents across Ontario. That concern is the impact of industrial wind turbines from an economic, health, environmental and social perspective.

We've seen the proof; we've seen the FOIs that prove that this Liberal government knew that there were adverse health effects from wind turbines before the Green Energy Act was even implemented. These FOIs prove that this Liberal government was trying to cover up their green energy scheme by telling environmental officers, who discovered the adverse health effects, to stand down. This further perpetuates this government's history of secrecy for their own gain.

This government should be ashamed that they have approved wind turbine contracts without a viable business plan and based on a study that only looked at direct health impacts of wind turbines, which is being directly hit with a wind turbine in the head. That is a direct impact.

This is shameful. Evidence is mounting. The Grey-Bruce medical officer of health has said that since we have excess energy in Ontario, now is the time to pause and study the indirect health impacts of industrial wind turbines. I agree with her.

Now is the time. We have the proof, we have the surplus energy and we have professionals raising red flags. This government needs to stand up, do the right thing for Ontario and immediately call for a moratorium on further wind development.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think the trumpets were hearing were for the Pope. I'm not sure, but we've been hearing some odd sounds.

IRENE ATKINSON

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I stand today to deliver a love letter really on behalf of all of us to our beloved trustee Irene Atkinson, who is currently fighting for her health in an ICU unit. Irene, as many people know, succumbed to smoke inhalation because of a fire in her kitchen. Now I think we want to send her a message that we want her to fight for her own health the way she fought so hard for 40 years in my riding for the health of our children in our public school system.

Irene is a feisty woman. Irene is known, of course, for her efforts for a fully funded public education system, but we know her in Parkdale—High Park as a woman who calls a spade a bloody shovel and as a woman who stood up not just for the public education system, but for clean trains from Pearson to downtown, for parks—for everything, really, that would make our community a better place.

So now our love and our prayers go to Irene and her family, from all of us. I think I speak on behalf of all of us, Mr. Speaker. Irene, now is the time to fight for yourself, because we need your energy more than ever. We need your spunk more than ever. We need you, Irene. We love you, Irene. Get well soon.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I invite the House to join me in congratulating two amazing young men from my riding of Oak Ridges—Markham. Jonathan Yapeter and Maaran Murugathas recently won a bronze medal at the International Robot Olympiad in South Korea.

Jonathan and Maaran are grade 7 students at John McCrae Public School in Markham, and they were the only Canadians at the competition. They were so honoured to represent their country and return home with a medal. They are inspiring young people in Markham to become interested in robotics.

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I got to know Jonathan and the Yapeter family soon after they came to Markham from Indonesia in April 2008, mainly because of their outstanding community involvement. I see them everywhere. Jonathan's brother

Jullian was a legislative page here at Queen's Park in 2010. He has since run successful campaigns to become a representative for his student council at Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School two years in a row. He actually told me he modelled his campaigns on mine. He volunteers with seniors and organized a fundraiser for the Hospital for Sick Children. Mother Janny volunteers with Catholic Community Services of York Region, helping new immigrants learn English. Father Yimmy is an electrical engineer who helps out at many events in the riding.

The Yapeter family are exemplary new Canadians, and I thank them for all their dedication and for their leadership in Oak Ridges-Markham. And to Jonathan and Maraana, congratulations again.

LOCAL HEROES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I would like to tell the House today about three constituents of my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry whose brave actions should make us all proud to be Ontarians.

Dan Regnier, a volunteer firefighter in South Stormont, was on his way to his Long Sault home from Ottawa on Friday, January 25, when he came across a burning vehicle involved in a multi-car collision on Highway 417. Mr. Regnier, with the help of three bystanders, freed a father and his teenage daughter from the front seats before going back to rescue the youngest son and another 12-year-old boy who were stuck in the backseat of the car, saving them just before the car burst into flames.

A city firefighter from Cornwall and resident of South Glengarry and a personal friend, John Vandrish, on his honeymoon at the Daytona 500, was a first responder to the fans that were injured in the NASCAR race that day. Mr. Vandrish and another unidentified man didn't hesitate to jump to help a couple who were bleeding from pieces of metal debris that had ripped through the stands.

Thirdly, a resident of South Dundas, 10-year-old Tyler Barkley, saved the life of his 70-year-old neighbour, Elsie Knight. She had fallen and broken her leg, lying outside the house for more than 30 hours unable to get help. Tyler heard her calls and immediately investigated and with the help of his dad assisted Elsie, and she was taken to a hospital in Ottawa.

These are just three examples of true heroes, selflessly helping others in time of need. We take immense pride in their actions.

LAKEHEAD THUNDERWOLVES

Mr. Bill Mauro: Today I want to give a big shout-out to my hometown: Thunder Bay's Lakehead University Thunderwolves men's basketball team. The Wolves, for the last four years, have made nationals four years in a row. This year, not only did they make nationals; they made it all the way to the final championship game, unfortunately succumbing to a pretty strong Carleton University Ravens squad, who won their third in a row.

Congratulations to Carleton. But the Lakehead University Thunderwolves have had a fantastic run for the last four years, culminating this year in an appearance in the championship game.

A special shout-out to six of the seniors who played their last game for LU: Joseph Jones, Greg Carter, Yoosrie Sahlia, Ben Johnson, Brendan King, and hometown boy Matthew Schmidt, who played his last game as well. Congratulations to Matthew.

The rest of the roster included Alex Robichaud and Brandon Myketa, both from Thunder Bay; Anthony McIntosh; Dwayne Harvey; Joey Nitychoruk; Nathan Wainwright; Ryan Thomson and Joe Hart. They had a great run as well. Congratulations to them and to coaches Scott Morrison and Matt Erdman, the entire assistant coaching staff and the training staff.

Not since the early 1970s, when I used to hang around the Thunderdome in its earlier days, when they were called the Norwesters—Howard Lockhart coached the team, and he had a pipeline down to Texas. We had some amazing teams. LU was nationally ranked every year. Not for over 30 years have we seen the LU program achieve this kind of success when it comes to men's basketball.

Congratulations to everybody. We're looking forward to next year already.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to inform the House today that an important step has been taken towards extending the life of the Darlington nuclear reactors by another 25 or 30 years. Last week, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission approved the environmental assessment for the refurbishment of the Darlington nuclear generating station.

Refitting the Darlington generating station will be one of Canada's largest capital infrastructure projects. It will create a significant number of local jobs and opportunities for business across Ontario.

The environmental assessment included a hearing by the commission in Courtice last December, where 690 intervenors commented on the refurbishment in the environmental process. I appeared before the commission myself in support of the project.

A refurbished Darlington generating station will provide 35,000 megawatts of clean, reliable, cost-effective electricity for Ontario. I should be clear that Tim Hudak is the only leader who's clear in his position of support of nuclear.

I'd like to commend the OPG vice-president—Wayne Robbins—chief nuclear operator, and all the members of the OPG team on the success of this application. Further, I'd like to extend my appreciation and thanks to the site manager, Brian Duncan, at the Darlington site, and congratulate them on the progress and work on the Darlington Energy Complex.

Mr. Speaker, energy is the future of Ontario. We must get it right, and Darlington serves a very important function in providing safe, reliable, cost-effective energy in Ontario.

POPE FRANCIS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As a result of unanimous consent by the member from Ajax–Pickering, we would stand and offer a silent reflection and prayer on the ascension of the Pope.

The House observed a moment's silence.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Standing order 63(a) provides that “the Standing Committee on Estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 60 and 62 no later than the third Thursday in November in each calendar year.”

The House not having received a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates for certain ministries and offices on Thursday, November 15, 2012, as required by the standing orders of this House, pursuant to standing order 63(b), the estimates before the committee of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs; Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; Ministry of the Attorney General; Cabinet Office; Ministry of Children and Youth Services; Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration; Ministry of Community and Social Services; Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services; Ministry of Consumer Services; Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation; Ministry of Energy; Ministry of Education; Ministry of the Environment; Ministry of Finance; Office of Francophone Affairs; Ministry of Government Services; Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; Ministry of Infrastructure; Ministry of Labour; Office of the Lieutenant Governor; Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Ministry of Natural Resources; Ministry of Northern Development and Mines; Office of the Premier; Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport; Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; Ministry of Transportation; Office of the Assembly; Office of the Auditor General; Office of the Chief Electoral Officer; and the Ombudsman of Ontario are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the estimates 2012-13 of these ministries and offices, not having been selected for consideration, are deemed to be received and concurred in.

Report deemed received.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CANADIAN MUSIC WEEK

Hon. Michael Chan: Mr. Speaker, this is Canadian Music Week here in Toronto. Over the past three decades, Canadian Music Week has grown. Today, it is the marquee music event in North America and the largest in Canada. Spanning six nights of performances, showcasing 1,000 bands and artists, highlighting over 60 live music venues, Canadian Music Week is a celebration of our thriving music industry that unites our leaders and talent together to explore, expand and enhance their competitive edge.

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Mr. Speaker, I can't think of a better place to host Canadian Music Week than right here in Ontario. Home to one of the world's most diversified music sectors, one of North America's largest live music scenes and a wealth of creative talent, Ontario is the music capital of Canada. The success of our music industry is the result of the vision, innovation and passion found in our artists and our music industry champions.

That's why our government is proactively partnering with this dynamic sector. We have established an industry working group that includes members of music associations, concert promoters, venue managers, festival organizers and individual artists to create a live music strategy in Ontario, a strategy that will allow the music industry to speak up with a unified voice; a strategy that will give audiences here at home and around the world increased access to the dynamic and diverse performances that are synonymous with Ontario's live music scene. It is a strategy that will promote Ontario as a premier destination for live music.

Speaker, our government is getting the word out. We are turning up the volume and amplifying the economic impact and opportunities that live music presents by boosting audiences, increasing visitor spending and encouraging greater economic activities throughout the province.

Today, the live music sector generates over \$450 million in revenues and contributes more than \$250 million to the Canadian economy. But beyond economic impact, music plays a leading role in enriching our quality of life. Our artists, our exciting events and our songs give us all a pride of place that defines our identity as a people, as a province and as a society, because music has the power to move us. Together, in partnership with our government, Ontario's music sector will continue to prosper.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. John O'Toole: On behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and our critic, Mr. Chudleigh, I'd like to offer my support for music week in Ontario.

It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon to respond to this statement on Canadian Music Week, taking place here in

Ontario from March 19 to 24. You could say, let the music begin.

Canadian Music Week began in 1981 and has grown to become one of Canada's largest and most influential media events. Now in its 31st year, Canadian Music Week draws top industry professionals to participate in a week-long program of activities designed to stimulate the exchange of market intelligence and provide networking opportunities in the music and entertainment field. This year, more than 2,000 national and international delegates are expected to attend from every corner of the globe.

Canadian Music Week is recognized as one of the premier events in North America. Canadian Music Week features innovative discussions, a cutting-edge trade show, an awards show, a film festival and a comedy festival as well. More than 1,000 bands will electrify 60 live music venues across Toronto's downtown core.

Throughout the duration of the event, performers will put on shows at world-class venues including the Air Canada Centre, Massey Hall, the world-famous Horseshoe Tavern and the El Mocambo. The event also makes its way to some trendy smaller venues, such as C'est What?, the Virgin Mobile Mod Club and the Annex WreckRoom.

Many emerging new bands use the festival as an opportunity to get spotted by prospective producers and record labels. This year's festival interview series will feature some of the industry's greatest-known talent. Legendary producer Bob Ezrin, famous for producing bands like Kiss, U2, Taylor Swift and Rod Stewart, will give a talk on the pressures of producing musical giants. Also, Ann and Nancy Wilson, of the well-known band Heart, will discuss their lengthy careers in the music industry.

Canadian Music Week wouldn't be possible without the support of dozens of important sponsors. Notable recognition goes out to Bell, Rogers, SiriusXM radio and Astral Media group for the flagship support over the last several years.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of our leader and the entire PC caucus, it gives me great pleasure to extend a warm invitation to all members of this House to come out and support this great Canadian event. You surely won't be disappointed by the vast talent, great excitement and overall good vibes that Canadian Music Week brings in Ontario.

More on a local note, in my riding, I'm very proud to say that Greg Keelor, of Blue Rodeo fame, has a home not far from where I live. Also, the road leads to the Canadian Tire Motorsport Park for the second annual Boots and Hearts festival, scheduled for August 2 to 4, 2013. Canadians performing at the festival will include The Stellas, a band from my riding—a very successful band.

A venue within my riding that showcases music is Port Perry's Town Hall 1873. The Scugog Choral Society celebrates music yearly with the festival—the Borelians Community Theatre.

Uxbridge, some might know, was home to Glenn Gould and also is famous for the Uxbridge Choral Society and OnStage. Uxbridge is also a vibrant community celebrating music, as we all do in Ontario. I enjoy the music festival.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses? The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, whom I will assist even this afternoon.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you for your help, Speaker. It's much appreciated.

Over the past two weeks, not only Ontarians but Canadians everywhere have had their minds, hearts and Canadian souls broken with the passing of Canada's own Stompin' Tom Connors. A true Canadian, he steadfastly remained within the Canadian music world, forgoing the lure of foreign exposure and what would likely have been a more lucrative living. Ontarians are so proud that he chose our province to call home.

He was the storyteller of our Canadian lives, put into music that plays to the core of our nationalism. Although we will miss him tremendously, we have a chance to honour him and to encourage more talented musicians like him when many descend upon Toronto this week. We have the opportunity to support our homegrown Canadian talent so that they can write, perform, entertain and make a viable living within the confines of our country.

Speaker, tomorrow is the beginning of Canadian Music Week. It's a jam-packed week of music showcases; the Crystal Awards dinner; radio, film, music, comedy and indie events; radio music awards; the Independent Music Awards; industry awards; filmfest screenings; the Canadian International Comedy Fest; and the songwriters' and music summits—every day offering a tremendous range of events, both learning and entertaining, that showcase the best of Canadian talent we have right here at home.

Those fortunate enough to be attending the Canadian music awards will be given opportunities such as the mentoring café, where they can speak one-on-one with experts in the field, helping them to move forward in their careers.

Since November, many talented Canadian musicians have competed regionally for a spot at Canadian Music Week, where they can receive national attention and recognition as well as financial and career support. They will also have the opportunity to attend various workshops and showcases, attend the trade show and get a clearer understanding of what the industry has to offer.

The Digital Media Summit will help our Canadian talent to optimize digital and social media strategies. Although so many of our youth are completely plugged into modern social media, they will learn how to turn their knowledge into a marketing tool to help their careers. At this summit, participants will learn to connect with the right people and organizations to further their careers, not only by speaking with those in the know but by being involved through interactive workshops. This hands-on experience will be sure to take them to the next

level they want to achieve. Those interested in a career in radio will enjoy many of the same opportunities through the Radio Interactive: International Radio Summit.

As with all the events, workshops and summits, the panelists, the speakers and other participants represent the best in our industry. And of course, the three-day Music Summit will include the Social Music Summit, the Live Touring Summit, and the Songwriters' and Publishers' Summit, all jam-packed with a significant variety of talented presenters, composers, agents, music business experts, peer engagement and professional advice.

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For those interested, they can attend a summit on integrating music and multimedia, including film, television and games—an opportunity to expand one's scope, to think outside the box and perhaps give their career a kick-start in a different direction.

Speaker, the opportunities that are available for our talented Canadians during Canadian Music Week seem to be endless. The work in organizing Canadian Music Week has obviously been extreme, and by a quick trip through the website—a very inclusive and well-planned schedule of significant events.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party, I extend our sincere thanks to all those who have put their time, energy, talent and love of the industry into making Canadian Music Week 2013 the success it seems destined to be. I wish each organizer, participant and all who have been part of such a significant undertaking all the best for a very successful event. You make Ontarians and Canadians proud.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure, for a change, to get up and speak here in the Legislature.

"Whereas collecting and restoring" older "vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment" itself; "and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis," and not when it's raining, "during four to five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario" Legislative Assembly "support Ontarians who collect and restore" older "vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure" that "vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be ex-

empt from additional emissions requirements enforced," quite rigorously, "by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into" older "cars and trucks."

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to the Minister of the Environment on this issue. I'm pleased to sign it and support it on behalf of enthusiasts across Ontario.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I couldn't agree more. I add my signature to the many thousands who have already signed, and I'm going to give it to Emily to deliver to the table.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a "Stop the Trades Tax" petition, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the" newly created "Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with" new "membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year;...

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:"

That the Liberal government stop their "job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

Mr. Speaker, I support this petition and shall sign it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario ranks ninth of 10 provinces in terms of the total per capita funding allocated to long-term care; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care data show that there are more than 30,000

Ontarians waiting for long-term-care placements and wait-times have tripled since 2005; and

“Whereas there is a perpetual shortage of staff in long-term-care facilities and residents often wait an unreasonable length of time to receive care, e.g., to be attended to for toileting needs; to be fed; to receive a bath; for pain medication. Since 2008, funding for 2.8 paid hours of care per resident per day has been provided. In that budget year, a promise was made to increase the funding to 4.0 hours per resident per day by 2012. This has not been done; and

“Whereas the training of personal support workers is unregulated and insufficient to provide them with the skills and knowledge to assist residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and under-regulated;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“(1) immediately increase the number of paid hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day to 4.0 hours (as promised in 2008);

“(2) develop a plan to phase in future increases so that the number of paid hours per resident per day of nursing and personal care is 5.0 hours by January 2015;

“(3) establish a licensing body, such as a college, that will develop a process of regulation, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers.”

It’s signed by over 500 people, my batch, and I am in agreement and would send this down with page John.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors from more than 80 municipalities and Ontario’s largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, seek an immediate moratorium on new wind development until” a further “independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

“Whereas the provincial Liberal government’s study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than that it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

“Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of health impacts of wind turbines;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately.”

I support this and will send it with page Ellen from Huron–Bruce.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: “Whereas Ontario ranks ninth of 10 provinces in terms of the total per capita funding allocated to long-term care; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care data show that there are more than 30,000 Ontarians waiting for long-term-care placements and wait-times have tripled since 2005; and

“Whereas there is a perpetual shortage of staff in long-term-care facilities and residents often wait an unreasonable length of time to receive care, e.g., to be attended to for toileting needs; to be fed; to receive a bath; for pain medication. Since 2008, funding for 2.8 paid hours of care per resident per day has been provided. In that budget year, a promise was made to increase the funding to 4.0 hours per resident per day by 2012. This has not been done; and

“Whereas the training of personal support workers is unregulated and insufficient to provide them with the skills and knowledge to assist residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and under-regulated;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“(1) immediately increase the number of paid hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day to 4.0 hours (as promised in 2008);

“(2) develop a plan to phase in future increases so that the number of paid hours per resident per day of nursing and personal care is 5.0 hours by January 2015;

“(3) establish a licensing body, such as a college, that will develop a process of regulation, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers.”

I agree with this and will affix my name to it.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario’s automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

“Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

“Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

“Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean

testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks.”

I affix my name in full support.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of hundreds in my riding, in particular the Graham family. It reads:

“Whereas Avastin is approved for use in the treatment of glioblastoma by Health Canada; and

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“Whereas Avastin is currently covered for this treatment by the provincial governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia; and

“Whereas in a clinical study Mr. Kevin Graham had a positive response to this medication and his tumour stopped growing; and

“Whereas Mr. Graham and other glioblastoma patients have not had positive responses to other chemotherapy drugs currently covered by the government of Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We respectfully request that Cancer Care Ontario be directed to reassess the importance of funding Avastin for brain cancer patients in Ontario to ensure equal access for Ontarians to the benefit of this treatment.”

I agree with this petition and will sign it, and I wish Mr. Graham all the best in his treatment.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition signed here, by a great many—I think over 2,000—constituents from Oxford county.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and the quality of life for all future generations;

“Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which will have significant human and financial costs for;

“Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

“Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

“Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

“Whereas the county of Oxford has passed a resolution requesting a moratorium on landfill construction or approval;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To implement a moratorium in Oxford county on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as

a full review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

“That this review of alternatives would give special emphasis on (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can efficiently and practically be recycled or reused so as not to require disposal in landfills.”

Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to present this petition. I affix my signature to it, Mr. Speaker.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jonah Schein: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario ranks ninth of 10 provinces in terms of the total per capita funding allocated to long-term care; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care data show that there are more than 30,000 Ontarians waiting for long-term-care placements and wait-times have tripled since 2005; and

“Whereas there is a perpetual shortage of staff in long-term-care facilities and residents often wait an unreasonable length of time to receive care, e.g., to be attended to for toileting needs; to be fed; to receive a bath; for pain medication. Since 2008, funding for 2.8 paid hours of care per resident per day has been provided. In that budget year, a promise was made to increase the funding to 4.0 hours per resident per day by 2012. This has not been done; and

“Whereas the training of personal support workers is unregulated and insufficient to provide them with the skills and knowledge to assist residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and under-regulated;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“(1) immediately increase the number of paid hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day to 4.0 hours (as promised in 2008);

“(2) develop a plan to phase in future increases so that the number of paid hours per resident per day of nursing and personal care is 5.0 hours by January 2015;

“(3) establish a licensing body, such as a college, that will develop a process of regulation, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers.”

I agree with this. I'll put my name on it and give it to page Emily.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Jim McDonnell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas beginning 1 January 2013 WSIB was expanded to include groups of employers and principals

who had previously been exempt from WSIB and had private insurance; and

"Whereas this new financial burden does nothing to improve worker safety and only drives up the cost of doing business in Ontario; and

"Whereas the chair of the WSIB," in community meetings last year, "admitted this will not help cover the accumulated WSIB debt, but" will only "make the problem worse by adding further liabilities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119."

I agree with this and will be signing it.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition, which is part of a 6,000-signature petition that comes from all over Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario ranks ninth of 10 provinces in terms of the total per capita funding allocated to long-term care; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care data show that there are more than 30,000 Ontarians waiting for long-term-care placements and wait-times have tripled since 2005; and

"Whereas there is a perpetual shortage of staff in long-term-care facilities and residents often wait an unreasonable length of time to receive care, e.g., to be attended to for toileting needs; to be fed; to receive a bath; for pain medication. Since 2008, funding for 2.8 paid hours of care per resident per day has been provided. In that budget year, a promise was made to increase the funding to 4.0 hours per resident per day by 2012. This has not been done; and

"Whereas the training of personal support workers is unregulated and insufficient to provide them with the skills and knowledge to assist residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and under-regulated;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"(1) immediately increase the number of paid hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day to 4.0 hours (as promised in 2008);

"(2) develop a plan to phase in future increases so that the number of paid hours per resident per day of nursing and personal care is 5.0 hours by January 2015;

"(3) establish a licensing body, such as a college, that will develop a process of regulation, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers."

I thank all the 6,000 people in Ontario that have signed this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask page John to bring it to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (LEAVES TO HELP FAMILIES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (CONGÉS POUR AIDER LES FAMILLES)

Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence / Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels, le congé pour soins à un enfant gravement malade et le congé en cas de décès ou de disparition d'un enfant dans des circonstances criminelles.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Labour for his lead-off speech.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important bill. It is a great pleasure to rise for the second reading of the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2013. It is a pleasure, Speaker, to speak to this proposed legislation because this bill goes to the heart of what a government should do. Our legislation would help the working people of our province to be with their loved ones when they're needed the most: at times of major health issues and in tragic situations involving children.

The Leaves to Help Families Act, if passed, would provide up to eight weeks of unpaid job-protected leave so that employees could care for loved ones who have a serious medical condition. The leave would have to be taken in one-week increments, and an employee could be take up to eight weeks per year per family member.

A family member for whom an employee could request unpaid time off to care for could include the employee's spouse; a parent, step-parent or foster parent of the employee or the employee's spouse; a child, step-child or foster child of the employee or the employee's spouse; a grandparent, step-grandparent, grandchild or step-grandchild of the employee or the employee's spouse; the spouse of a child of the employee; the employee's brother or sister; or a relative of the employee who is dependent on the employee for care or assistance.

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Importantly for many in our province, it could be taken to care for family members who live in other countries. We know that many Ontarians were born outside of Canada and, in the greater Toronto area, that percentage is about half. So the importance of having job-protected leave to take care of family members who have a serious medical condition is all the more important when distance separates us from those we care about, and we must travel to be with them.

Our proposed legislation would also entitle parents up to 37 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to provide care to a critically ill child.

In addition, this bill would show compassion by providing up to 52 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for parents of a missing child due to a crime. It would also provide up to 104 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for parents of a child who has died where the disappearance or death is probably the result of a crime.

The hard-working people of our province and those who depend on them deserve nothing less than this.

Every member of this House and all those who are listening to these proceedings today share a common experience. We're either sons or daughters; we have parents and grandparents; we may have spouses and children. In short, we are all part of a family, and when those family members have major health problems, we want to be there because we care.

There are many things that members of this House may debate and have varied opinions on. However, the need for compassion for our loved ones when they face a medical crisis is not one of them. That is because everyone in this House, and those who may be watching these proceedings on television, know that when loved ones face a major health problem, we need to be at their side. We need to care for and reassure those we are closest to: our family.

It is when we face a major medical problem that we realize just how dependent we are on those who care for us, and it is when our family members have major health issues that we realize how dependent they are on us. At these times, our concentration and concerns are not on our day-to-day work but on working to restore those we love to health.

We all know that time stands still when our loved ones face such crises, and nothing else matters—certainly, not that project or email or that deadline we thought required our full attention—because, at such times, our hearts and minds are elsewhere, with those we love who are suffering, who need our attention, who need our care.

This bill, if passed, would give working Ontarians the right to take care of their loved ones during very difficult times without having to worry about losing their jobs. That time of need could be the result of a heart attack or cancer or a car accident. This time of family crisis could also come when a child is rushed to hospital or when a child is missing or dies as a result of crime.

This legislation, if passed, would protect both full- and part-time employees and even those on temporary contracts, and it would help protect their families as well.

We have asked our federal counterparts to provide employment insurance entitlement for those who qualify under this bill who are caring for family members with a serious medical condition, just as they do under our family medical leave legislation. We want the federal government to enter into a partnership with us on this so that these caregivers would also have the income security they deserve.

If passed, this legislation will give the province's working people time: time to care for their elderly parents, time to be with their hospitalized child, time to be with their spouse who has had a stroke or heart attack.

All Ontarians are part of a family. We know that both employers and employees alike can face these difficult situations when loved ones need care. There is an obvious need for this legislation that is all too familiar to anyone who has ever faced the challenge of balancing work with family members who are struggling with major health problems.

I think we can all probably speak of personal circumstances where we may have had to take some time off in order to look after a loved one, someone who is close to us, who is a member of our family and had to face some sort of serious medical condition, and therefore had to take the time off. I think what the challenge really becomes is this: Should we have to make a choice between looking after a loved one in their prolonged need of care or protect our job? This legislation tries to reconcile those two realities that many Ontarians face on a regular basis.

I think all members can tell stories in that regard. It's true for my own experience as well. My father has faced a serious medical condition; he is a heart patient who has gone through a quadruple bypass surgery. I recall very much—I was young at that time; I was a student—when he went through his very serious heart surgery. He was home for a long period of time, and we at home all had to take time to look after him through his rehabilitation, through that whole surgery. Of course, that could be very taxing.

I remember, as a student, missing classes and taking time off—a slightly different situation than somebody who has employment and may have to take time off, but the point being that, when a member of a family goes through a serious medical condition such as my father did, with a very significant heart surgery, you look to your family members. Family members are the best people available to stay at home and to look after them.

That's where we want to provide help. That's the kind of peace of mind I think that we collectively, as an elected body, want to be able to give to the people of Ontario, to say, "In your time of need, where you may have to decide between looking after your loved one—your parent, your child, your spouse—or going to work so you can protect your job, we're making the choice easy. We're going to give you time off; we're going to protect your job so that you are able to look after your loved one."

There was a time when our society moved at a slower pace, but the world has changed. We now have what has been called the sandwich generation: busy parents who often both work and are trying to care for children, and yet, at the same time, often face the additional challenge of caring for aging parents or one another when major health problems arise.

It is at times like these that we realize how much we need the social safety net that we, as government, can

provide. It is then that we realize just how important, how critical, it is to have our jobs protected when loved ones with major health issues need us most. It is then that we realize our human limitations in dealing with family crises that may involve children and may require 100% of our time.

Without the security of knowing that our jobs are protected, sometimes those who need us can be afraid for us and not want to ask for our help, nor want to jeopardize our employment—a livelihood they may depend upon as well. They can be legitimately worried that they are taking us away from our jobs, and this worry is made all the more real in challenging economic times.

For the family and for the parents of working Ontarians, this reluctance to reach out and ask for help can come from the knowledge that their child or spouse does not currently have the job protection they need. They may fear that their request for help might leave their loved one vulnerable or even unemployed. These fears are not unfounded, and that is why we are proposing this bill, but there are also other pressing reasons.

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I would like to speak about some of those who need to care for their aging parents, for instance. As we all know, we have a growing aging population. We are going to have 43% more seniors a decade from now and twice as many seniors 20 years from now, and that is a good thing. I'm sure all those in this House hope to be among them eventually. I, for one, for sure want to live as long and as healthy as I can. But of course, as we all know, people do need more care as they age. There are times involving serious medical conditions, like a broken hip or a stroke, when that human need is critical. Our seniors, our aging parents, naturally want to be at home as long as they can, and it is care by family members that helps ensure that ability to remain where they want to be: at home, where they are most comfortable and feel most secure; at home, where there is less expense for our health care system and less pressure on needed health services.

Our government, through my colleague the Minister of Health, Deb Matthews, has launched a care strategy to help seniors remain healthy and provide better-quality care in the home, where they desire to be. Our proposed family caregiver leave recognizes the wider role family members play in health care. But to provide that care and fulfill that role, working Ontarians need to know their jobs are protected and will be there while they look after their loved ones.

As we all know, taking care of a loved one who is ill does not solely consist of accompanying them to MRIs or chemotherapy, but involves staying with them afterward and helping them in every way necessary. It is a job that has no breaks. It is a job that does not concern itself with the fact you may need to be up in the morning for work but that you need to tend to your loved one at night.

The last time we introduced this bill, we heard from a woman named Marcella. Her experience is touching and compelling. Marcella told us the following story about her experience:

"I took care of my mom for about three years. I'm the sole caregiver for her. I've been living here in Canada for about 28 years. The only family that I have now is my brother, who is in Montreal, and my mother, who lives with me. We're not fortunate to have a lot of relatives ... so all of the pressure and her care is on me. Two years of the three that I've been taking care of my mother I was in a full-time job. I don't know how I did it, but I managed to do both things.

"Those very same two years were the worst years for my mother. She was on radiation, chemotherapy, surgery. But what I have to say is that caregiving is not just bringing them to the appointments or bringing them to CT scans and MRIs—being a caregiver is also being there in the middle of the night, being there all the time. We don't have a break; you can't tell a disease" or injury, "Okay, I need a few days off and then I'll be back and take care of you."

So I really hope that you will support this bill.

"As caregivers, we are not invincible and we need support. I definitely need to feel, if I get a full-time job and my mother winds up being eligible for surgery, I can be there for her and not worry about it. Right now I am in a part-time job, and this is something I have to think about every day."

Clearly, Marcella's story would resonate with many, many Ontarians across the province—stories we may have shared in some way or another, stories we definitely must have heard in our communities across the province. This true and genuinely touching account resonates with many of us who have aging parents or other loved ones with a serious medical condition and who, at the same time, are trying to juggle their work responsibilities. Stories like Marcella's put a human face on the need for this bill. My heart goes out to all those in these situations and to their loved ones.

Again, I know from my own experience and the experiences of my constituents the real need for time to care for those we love. Needing time like this can be stressful and difficult for working Ontarians where they don't have the security of knowing that their employment, their means of providing for themselves and their family, is protected and is secure. At times like this, the very last thing we need to worry about is being out of work. In those situations, where parents are faced with a critically ill child, their attention and time must be focused on the crisis at hand. That is why the leaves in our bill, leaves for parents of critically ill children and children who are missing or who die where it's probably the result of a crime, are so important.

These leaves complement the newly extended federal income supports by providing up to 37 weeks of job-protected leave to care for a critically ill child, up to 52 weeks of job-protected leave for employees who are parents of a child who has disappeared where it is probably the result of a crime, and up to 104 weeks of job-protected leave for employees who are parents of a child who has died where it is probably the result of a crime. And as I said, Speaker, employees eligible for

critically ill child care leave may also be entitled to federal employment insurance for most of their leave, while employees eligible for crime-related child death or disappearance leave may be entitled to the Federal Income Support for Parents of Murdered or Missing Children grant. All parents can sympathize with other mothers or fathers who face these difficult situations.

Ontario currently provides a number of supports to parents who face crises. Ontario victim services, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, provides direct services to victims of crime across Ontario and funds community organizations that deliver support services to victims. The direct services include the Financial Assistance for Families of Homicide Victims program. The Financial Assistance for Families of Homicide Victims program helps eligible parents, whether biological or adoptive, and spouses of homicide victims by providing up to \$10,000 per homicide. The Vulnerable Victims and Family Fund helps victims of crime and families of homicide victims participate more fully in the criminal court process. Financial and court-based supports include helping both victims of crime and families of homicide victims to travel to attend court during key points in a criminal proceeding—for instance, at trial—and providing vulnerable victims with interpretation services when they are observing a criminal proceeding. Victims of crime and families of homicide victims would apply through Ontario's Victim/Witness Assistance Program, which is available in all 54 court districts across the province.

Our province also provide a variety of supportive services to parents of children who face a health crisis. The Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities Program, which is managed by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, helps parents with some of the extra costs of caring for a child who has a severe disability. A parent or a legal guardian whose child is under 18 years of age, lives at home and has a severe disability may be eligible to receive help under this program, depending on the family's income. Parents can get between \$25 and \$440 a month to help with costs such as travel to doctors and hospitals, special shoes and clothes, parental relief, wheelchair repairs, assistive devices, hearing aids, hearing aid batteries, prescription drugs, dental care and eyeglasses. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services funds two programs that can give families a break or respite from the day-to-day care of their child with special needs. Under out-of-home respite, families of children with multiple special needs can receive up to seven days of respite per year, provided in a location other than their own home. The child must be under 18 years of age, have multiple special needs because of a physical or developmental disability, and live at home and need care 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

There is also enhanced respite funding. This grant is paid to families who are caring for a child who is medically fragile and/or depends on a technological device, needing care 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and is paid in addition to other respite services. Families may

be eligible for up to \$3,500 per child per year. The child must be under 18 years of age, live at home, and need intensive care and constant monitoring on a 24-hour basis.

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Speaker, to illustrate the need for our proposed legislation, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2013: This past Thursday, I held an event in the Ottawa area to help spread the word about the need for this bill. At this event were two parents, Carlos and Patricia Munante, whose child Gabriel, affectionately called Gabo, had been diagnosed with cancer in the past year. Carlos Munante, a federal government worker, was fortunate to have accumulated enough leave to take time off when son Gabriel, who is seven years old, was diagnosed with leukemia.

This is what Carlos said at that particular event: "I can't imagine having had to go to work those first four months. I think this [legislation] is very important for families."

His wife, Patricia, who works for the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board and has had to take significant time off to look after her son Gabriel, believes the proposed changes would be helpful as well. She said to me, "We have seen some families where ... if they're from out of town, one of the parents is unable to be with their child because they do need to work."

Speaker, we need to ensure that Patricia, who is in a provincially regulated workplace, can access the same job-protected leave and EI benefits that Carlos can as a federal employee. We desperately hope the situation here never becomes critical, but for families across Ontario, it may be.

It was really generous, of course, of the Munantes to welcome me and the MPP from Ottawa-Orléans, Phil McNeely, into their home to talk about their family situation and the health of their son Gabriel, a beautiful young man. I think it would be difficult for any parent. As the father of a young 10-month-old, my heart was sinking as I was talking to the family.

The family, of course, had a really strong, bold face, as any parents would do, smiling, laughing, making sure that Gabriel has everything he needs so that he can work through this critical time.

But that whole meeting with Patricia and Carlos and Gabriel highlighted to me how important it is that we have legislation like this, how important it is that we ensure that parents, who love their children so much, have that opportunity to stay at home and focus on their child and nothing else: not work, no other things in life but their child, so that they can be with him or her, to ensure that that child is growing, is strong and is able to fight any challenge that he or she may be facing.

That's why we need critically ill child leave so parents can take up to 37 weeks to take care of a child and so that all Ontario parents can access the federal benefits.

This is also a family that has chewed up a lot of vacation time, in the case of the Munantes. It's good that dad Carlos had vacation time available, but that's not true

for everyone. That's why we have introduced family caregiver leave, so if mom Patricia needs up to eight weeks off, she has the job protection. A family like this illustrates why we have urged the federal government to follow our lead and provide job protection and EI access for family caregiver leave.

Not every situation, thankfully, is a critically ill child. There are also a lot of other situations where workers have to take care of a brother, sister or parent. They need to be protected, too.

Speaker, in relating the story of these brave parents who are caring for their child with cancer, I will take the opportunity to thank the Canadian Cancer Society for their support for our proposed legislation.

Canadian Cancer Society Vice-President Rowena Pinto has said, in a March 6, 2013, news release, that, "Bill 21 is welcome news for those who need to take leave from work to care for a loved one with cancer.... This legislation will allow families to concentrate on supporting their loved ones instead of worrying about losing jobs." Ms. Pinto also explained that, "Cancer is more than a health issue. It is also a complex social issue. With approximately 22% of Canadians grappling with caregiving responsibilities for seriously ill family members, the physical, emotional and financial burden on caregivers is a veritable strain on many families."

That is why we introduced this important proposed legislation. And we have received other supportive words of encouragement regarding this proposed legislation.

Sue VanderBent, the executive director of the Ontario Home Care Association, has said, "Home care systems are dependent on the support of families and loved ones. For many, the caregiving responsibilities are intense, emotional and lengthy in duration and the demands can result in absence from work. The Leaves to Help Families will provide family caregivers with peace of mind related to their employment. The members of the Ontario Home Care Association are hopeful that all parties will move quickly to pass this legislation."

Emanuel Carvalho, executive vice-president of health care for the Service Employees International Union, has said the following: "This legislation will provide urgently needed relief to overstretched families who are caring for a loved one while juggling responsibilities like work and raising children."

Mary Lewis, the executive director of mission of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario has said, "We are very pleased to support the Ontario government's proposed legislation, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2013, and congratulate the government on taking this important step to protect the job security of Ontarians caring for loved ones. The Heart and Stroke Foundation recognizes that the health and support of caregivers is a vital aspect in a person's recovery from heart disease and stroke. We look forward to working together to further support caregivers through our health and information programs, like Living with Heart Disease and Living with Stroke, in order to

give Ontarians much-needed support when filling this role after a tragic event."

David Harvey, who is the chief public policy and program initiatives officer of the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, commented the following: "The Alzheimer Society of Ontario recognizes the commitment of the new government to improve the supports available to family caregivers. Families value being able to support their family members to live in the community. Families indeed are the front line of community care and it only makes sense for new 'enablers' so that people can integrate family and employment responsibilities."

Lastly, Lisa Levin, chair of the Ontario Caregiver Coalition, said the following in supporting this bill: "The Ontario Caregiver Coalition, a collaborative that works to advance the interests of caregivers, is pleased that our decision-makers are recognizing the important contributions made by caregivers. Based on national data, it is estimated that caregiving contributes between \$24 billion and \$31 billion annually to maintain the health of Canadians. Caregivers need our support to continue their critical role. This is the beginning of a broader dialogue on economic and social supports to help those who take care of their loved ones."

Speaker, our bill is for those struggling to balance work and care commitments. And in the most difficult and most tragic of situations, where parents face the disappearance of a child or the death of a child as the probable result of crime, our proposed legislation reaches out and compassionately provides job-protected leave for those who face these trying personal times of crises.

We shouldn't have to worry about being unemployed on top of struggling to deal with the medical crisis of a loved one or a tragic situation involving our children, because when the chips are down, you want to know that someone is there for you, that someone is watching your back. This is an opportunity for government to show the compassion our citizens need and deserve in their time of need. That is what is at the heart of this proposed legislation, and that is the motivation for our bill.

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If passed, our proposed legislation would assist working people and the economy in other ways as well. It will help protect and retain needed employees who might otherwise have to leave their employment or might lose it. Keeping skilled labour is good for employers, employees and the overall Ontario economy alike. The Ontario Ministry of Finance projects a shortfall of employees ranging from 200,000 to 1.8 million by 2031, according to a 2010 study entitled *People Without Jobs, Jobs Without People*, by former Seneca College president Dr. Rick Miner. Skilled labour helps keep our province competitive, and that is important, especially in these times. Job-protected leave during periods of crisis is one thing we can do to help our skilled labour force on the job.

Our new government, in the past 30 days, has worked hard to protect working Ontarians and families. Since being sworn in on February 11, Premier Kathleen Wynne

and members of her cabinet have visited communities across the province, met with important partners inside and outside government, and introduced a number of new initiatives and investments to get government working for the people of Ontario.

To help build a job-creation economy, Premier Wynne has held five jobs round tables with private sector, labour, education and training partners across Ontario.

Last month, Speaker, Ontario created 35,300 jobs, including nearly 21,000 jobs for young people. In February, Ontario created nearly 70% of all new jobs in Canada. In fact, Ontario employment has increased by 415,500 net new jobs since the economic low in June 2009, with full-time employment up 380,600 and part-time employment up 34,900.

To help strengthen communities, the government held the first northern cabinet meeting since 1995.

We're also investing \$100 million over five years to support world-leading brain research which will improve health care.

Ontario is also providing grants for community groups to clean up Great Lakes beaches or shorelines and to restore wetlands.

To build a fairer, compassionate society, our government has introduced this legislation that would, if passed, create these three new categories of job-protected leave: family caregiver leave, leave for the parents of critically ill children, and leave for parents of children who are missing or who die as the probable result of a crime.

We've introduced this bill so people can take care of their loved ones without fear of losing their employment. Speaker, our proposed legislation would provide reasonable protection for both employers and employees alike. And while we will ask our federal counterparts to provide employment insurance to those who would be eligible for the family caregiver leave to care for family members with a serious medical condition, it would, for these working individuals, be unpaid.

If passed, this proposed legislation will be enforced by Ministry of Labour employment standards officers, who could step in if employees' rights are denied. I will add that the strategies, tools and resources that we have developed over the past few years to successfully deal with employment standards claims give us an enhanced ability to enforce this proposed legislation, as well as other provisions of the Employment Standards Act.

Speaker, this legislation would be in the interest of all workplace parties, and that is because, whether we are employers or employees, we are all part of a family. We know what families go through in times of major health problems. It's in nobody's interest, if you have a loved one not well at home, that you have to go to work and, instead of focusing on your work, your mind is at home thinking about the loved one. That doesn't help the employer. That doesn't help your work. That doesn't make the workplace any more productive. It's probably best that that employee is at home, looking after their loved one so that they can help their loved one, their child, their parent get healthy as soon as possible so they can be back

at work as soon as possible with no worries in mind, and with focus on work, not at home. This type of leave will create a win-win for both employees and employers.

This bill is for young working families or single parents needing to care for their child in hospital with a serious medical condition. It is for the wife seeing her husband through a difficult period of chemotherapy. It is for someone helping to care for that elderly parent who is suffering major health problems as a result of a fall or the aftermath of a stroke.

This proposed legislation is our way of saying to the people of this province that we will help protect you as you protect your loved one. The same spirit of compassion that inspired this bill also led our government to introduce family medical leave back in 2004. The current family medical leave legislation provides unpaid job-protected leave for employees when a family member is facing a terminal condition.

Our proposed family caregiver leave would apply in cases of a serious medical condition, even where there is no significant risk of imminent death. Our proposed family caregiver leave would be in addition to family medical leave. This means that if you are caring for a loved one under the proposed family caregiver leave and their condition becomes terminal, you would also be entitled to family medical leave.

Our province also provides personal emergency leave. This leave may be taken for personal illness, injury or medical emergency of an employee, or the death, illness, injury or medical emergency of or matters concerning certain family members or relatives who are dependent on you for care and assistance. Personal emergency leave is unpaid job-protected leave that allows you to take up to 10 days per calendar year away from work in workplaces of 50 or more employees.

Our proposed family caregiver leave legislation would assist those Ontarians who are most vulnerable, and that is because the burden of caregiving lies more heavily on those without the financial means to provide care. Our bill will assist the poor. It will help the immigrant family new to Canada, already burdened with adapting to a new land. It will help single parents. It will assist single adult children caring for an elderly parent. And it will assist women, to whom we all know a disproportionate share of the responsibility of caring for a family member still falls.

When we and those we love face these very difficult situations, the last thing we need is to fear being left unemployed because we need time away from work. Working Ontarians should not have to choose between their jobs and helping family members with major health problems. That is why our new government promised to reintroduce this bill. That is why we have fulfilled that promise and taken this action for the working people of this province.

Another goal of our new government, which I'm sure we all share, is to make Ontario the healthiest place in North America, both to grow up in and to grow old in. We all know that, across Canada, we have an aging

population, and it is clear that this puts pressure on our health care system. So when the opportunity is there to help seniors facing a serious medical condition stay in their home, where the financial cost to society is lower, we believe making that happen makes sense for everyone.

We can and should recognize the vital role family members play in health care and make sure they can play this role without fear of job loss. As both the Minister of Health and the minister responsible for seniors have said, our proposed family caregiver leave would support our government's Seniors Strategy. This strategy recognizes that providing good care at home allows our older Ontarians to remain where they want to be, while at the same time relieving the stress on our hospital and long-term-care system. This is an important step forward. But to take the step, family caregivers have to be able to be there. Caregiving for our older loved ones, of course, is not new, but due to medical advances, families are now providing more complex care for a longer period of time than ever before. Stresses on the health care system mean that more and more family members are taking on more caregiving responsibilities, and they need support and preparation for their new role.

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That is why our government introduced Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors. This plan, introduced by the provincial government at the beginning of 2012, represents a significant shift in direction for health care in the province, with an unprecedented focus on providing better community care and, specifically, home care. Over the next three years, funding for three million additional personal-support-worker hours will provide care at home for 90,000 more seniors.

The plan also specifies that the Hospital at Home model of care promotes increased patient satisfaction, reduces treatment complications, increases provider work satisfaction and reduces pressure on the acute sector as a result of fewer patients waiting for hospital admission from emergency departments. Our government is planning on providing more care at home across the province through innovative models such as the Hospital at Home program.

Speaker, Ontario provides other assistance to our seniors and their caregivers. Our province offers the Assistive Devices Program, which includes the Home Oxygen Program. The objective of the Assistive Devices Program is to provide support and funding to Ontario residents who have long-term physical disabilities and to provide access to personalized assistive devices appropriate for an individual's basic needs. Eligibility includes any Ontario resident who has a valid Ontario health card issued in their name and has a physical disability of six months or longer. The Assistive Devices Program pays up to 75% of the cost of equipment; for example, breathing aids. For others, such as hearing aids, the Assistive Devices Program contributes a fixed amount. The Home Oxygen Program pays 100% of the Assistive Devices Program price for oxygen and related equipment

for seniors 65 years of age or older and for individuals 64 years of age or younger who are on social assistance, residing in a long-term-care facility or who are receiving professional services through a community care access centre, and 75% of the Assistive Devices Program price for all others.

The Ontario Drug Benefit program covers most of the cost of 3,800 prescription drug products, some nutrition products and some diabetic testing agents. A person is eligible for Ontario Drug Benefit program benefits if he or she lives in Ontario, has a valid Ontario health card, and at least one of these statements applies: He or she is 65 years of age or older; he or she lives in a long-term-care home or a home for special care; he or she is enrolled in the Home Care Program; he or she has high drug costs relative to income and is registered in the Trillium Drug Program; or he or she receives social assistance through Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program. The Trillium Drug Program helps people who have high prescription drug costs relative to their household income. The Trillium Drug Program covers all drugs approved under the Ontario Drug Benefit program.

Our province also provides the Special Drugs Program, which covers the full cost of certain outpatient drugs used to treat a number of serious conditions, including:

- cystic fibrosis, which is a lung disease;
- thalassemia, a blood disease;
- zidovudine and pentamidine for HIV infection, a disease of the immune system;
- erythropoietin for anemia due to end-stage kidney disease;
- cyclosporin after solid organ or bone marrow transplant;
- children with growth failure;
- clozapine for schizophrenia; and
- Gaucher's disease, which is a genetic disorder.

Speaker, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care also supports a number of community programs for persons with acquired brain injury. An acquired brain injury is an injury that occurs after birth and may result from a trauma or externally caused physical injury—such as a motor vehicle crash, assault or fall—or may result from an internal medical condition such as an aneurysm, tumour or meningitis. There are adult day programs for people with acquired brain injuries in a number of communities across the province. Acquired brain injury outreach services provide support to individuals with acquired brain injuries, living alone or with families, in the community. Acquired brain injury services are also available through the community care access centres to support individuals with acquired brain injuries at home.

Asking for help is often hard for aged loved ones, because they don't want to be a bother or think they will be a burden to busy younger family members. Our proposed legislation would help ensure that needed and necessary time to care.

As Minister of Labour, I am aware that our province faces a skills shortage. Whether it is the high-tech or construction industry, skilled employees are one of the important keys to a prosperous future for our province. Without the right skilled employees to do the job, the job will be done elsewhere, outside of Ontario. Keeping these skilled workers here when they encounter the same family health crises we all face is a matter, then, of keeping our Ontario economy strong and secure. It would make good economic sense to provide this caregiver leave rather than see these skilled employees leave their employers.

For those who have questioned whether this proposed family caregiver leave could be taken advantage of, our bill provides reasonable protections for employers as well. First, for an employee to be entitled to the leave, a physician would have to issue a medical certificate stating that the family member has a serious medical condition. A copy of this certificate would have to be provided to an employer upon request. Secondly, this proposed leave for those taking care of family members who have a serious medical condition would be unpaid. We will ask our federal counterparts to make those who take this leave eligible for employment insurance benefits. If passed, these proposed leaves would have reasonable controls in place to balance the interests of all workplace parties.

All Ontarians, whether they are employees or employers, can, in a heartbeat, face a situation in which a family member suddenly has a serious medical condition. Major health problems do not discriminate. We share a common bond both as family members and as human beings vulnerable to sickness and injury, and it is the most vulnerable among us who would benefit most from this bill. We know that those who financially have the least have the least ability to use resources when caring for family members who have major health problems. For those for whom normal, everyday life is a struggle, how much more is this true when they face the additional burden of caring for family members dealing with serious medical conditions? It is these caregivers who may also have the greatest fear of job loss. It is also these employees who may have the least in terms of benefit provisions that would assist or protect them.

Again, our bill, if passed, would help the most vulnerable among us to protect those they love who are struggling with major health issues. A working mother should not have to hesitate to take time away from her critically-ill or injured child or her husband with a serious medical condition because she fears losing her income. A single parent should not have to choose between their employment and being there for an elderly father or mother who has just suffered a stroke or broken hip.

I know, as well, from the experience of my constituents, the struggles of those who immigrate to this country, of those who are dealing with learning a new language and those who may face job barriers or who are making an adjustment to a new culture. For these individuals, their job may be the one security, the one

anchor of hope, in a life surrounded by challenges. This proposed job-protected leave for family caregivers will help these immigrants during their period of adjustment to a new country and province.

There's another group, of course, to whom an unequal share of the responsibility of caregiving has fallen, and that is the poor and the marginalized. Those who have the least have the least resources to deal with health crises, so they are vulnerable. I do not believe that anyone in this House would want a mother to worry about providing for her child, who is critically ill or injured, because she fears she will lose all her significant part of that family's livelihood.

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Certainly, any employee who is working part-time or on a temporary contract can also be among those who are among the most vulnerable and who may have the greatest fear of losing their job when they need to take time off when family health crises occur. Our bill would make all employees who are covered by the Ontario Employment Standards Act eligible for this proposed job-protected family caregiver leave. Whether they are full-time, part-time or on a temporary contract, Ontario employees covered by the Employment Standards Act would be eligible for this leave. That is only fair and only just.

Speaker, since I've introduced this bill in this House, I've heard from many parents from across the province who have written to me, demonstrating their support for this bill and how it will help them personally. I just want to read a small paragraph from one email that I received shortly after I introduced this bill in the House two weeks ago. This couple, which has a young child who is fighting a particular kind of cancer, said this to me in an email:

"I saw you are advocating for helping families for care for sick loved ones and wanted to reach out and say thank you, and to ask if there's anything we can do to help. Do you need photos of families? We did a family photo shoot around Christmas and have high-res versions. Do you need photos of you talking to affected families to help with promotion? Signatures? I'm sure you are connected to Candlelighters, but if there's anything we can do, please let us know."

This is from a mother who wants to ensure that this type of leave is available for her and her husband so they can look after their child—a direct plea of support, of endorsement, so that we, as members in the House, are able to do the right thing and pass this legislation in law.

Speaker, we know that the one thing working Ontarians need most when it comes to caring for family members with major health issues is the time to be with their loved one. This proposed legislation is part of our new government's commitment to ensure that families across Ontario have the support they need when they need it the most.

Our proposed Leaves to Help Families Act is a matter of compassion and caring for those who provide care to their loved ones. It is simply the right thing to do for

Ontario families. With our proposed legislation, we will be able to tell working Ontarians, "Go. Go and take care of your loved one's needs. With the protections we have provided, you can make that a priority. Go and be reassured that your job will be there when you return." It says, Speaker, that, "We understand why you care and why you need to be there."

I really hope that we as legislators, duly elected by the people of Ontario, as we debate this legislation, remember those stories in our communities—perhaps remember our own personal experiences where we may have had to take time off, where we were faced with a choice of either looking after our loved one at home—our key priority—or to be at work so that we can protect our job. I hope we can think about all those situations and that we work together in a direction where we are able to pass this bill.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that I have heard and received very supportive words from both the critics from Her Majesty's opposition and from the third party. I thank them, and I look forward to working with them as we go through this debate and, of course, to committee and third reading, because I think families are looking at us. Families are hoping that we will go through this important process, that we will pass these leaves and that we'll pass them into law so that they can have access to these leaves as soon as possible so that they can start looking after their loved ones now, not at some other time in the future.

Speaker, this bill is the right thing to do for the working people of our province and for those they love. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important bill. I look forward to further debate on this bill. I look forward to working with all members on this very important piece of legislation so that together we can do the right thing: pass this bill into law as soon as we can and give the relief that families deserve so much so that they have the freedom, the choice, to look after their loved ones at home.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the minister's remarks regarding this very important bill that I know we'd debated before the prorogation of the House.

There's a couple of things that I have concerns about. One is the way it's mentioned regarding the federal government in hopes that they pass on the information. We requested the federal government to support through EI. I would hope that further negotiations—when legislation comes forward like this, that there's in-depth negotiations to ensure that those sorts of things come forward.

But the one concern that I brought up when this legislation was debated previously, Mr. Speaker, was the concern with my own aunt, for example. She had a knee replacement and was paralyzed through an improperly placed epidural. The difficulty there is that she has trouble getting to and from any appointments now—she's

paralyzed—and my mother tries to assist her on a regular basis. But in order for her to utilize this potential legislation, if and when it comes about and passes, if she had to take time off work, she'd have to take a week off in order to take her for a half-day appointment to find out what can be done regarding that. That's where the concern comes in: the ability or the flexibility of the legislation to accommodate individuals in such situations. I mean, it's horrendous to think that an individual would be paralyzed through an epidural being put in for a simple knee replacement, but those things are happening. In order to assist those individuals—the siblings, the kids have moved away, and it's very difficult. If she can get in for an appointment on short notice, then my mother, when she was working, would have had to take the entire week off to assist her for half a day's appointment.

So anything that would be able to come along with some flexibility that way would go a long way in ensuring that the right thing is being done for a lot more people in the province of Ontario to assist in the best manner possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened to nearly the entire hour that the Minister of Labour stood up and spoke about this bill. There's little in the bill that one can criticize, save and except that one has to know from the outset that this is unpaid leave. This is unpaid leave to people who have to take time off work, many of whom will have a very difficult time finding the wherewithal to continue or to give the kind of care that they might want to give to a loved one for a period of up to eight weeks.

I am mindful that there is going to be some negotiation with the federal government, but also remember, if this comes out of EI claims, that nearly 50% of the people of the province of Ontario find themselves, when they require employment insurance, not to be eligible for it. And so I don't know how this is going to work when more than 50% of the people get laid off from their employment and they find out that EI does not help them. Is the same more than 50% not going to happen in this case as well? I would hazard to guess, probably. That's something we cannot tie ourselves to, and we cannot look at this bill as going to solve the problems of anyone. Will it help someone to retain their job over that period of six to eight weeks that they might be off? Yes, it will. Is that a good thing? Yes, it is. But is it going to help a family to survive when there may, in fact, be no money coming in, is a totally different story.

I'd just like to comment, in the 30 seconds—I listened to the minister throughout, and he has done what many ministers do: talk about the new government—the new government. It's the same 50 members that are over there. It's the same 50 people who were here under the McGuinty government. It's the same cabinet, by and large, although they've shuffled around. It is not a new government. It is a recast government, if you want, but it is hardly a new government, and what is coming out in this bill and in other bills is not much different than we saw under Mr. McGuinty.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to congratulate the new Minister of Labour for this bill that he has introduced, Bill 21. It's a wonderful, wonderful bill. I was listening carefully to the minister when he was presenting. As a former nurse, I was thinking about these individuals that I know that went through a very difficult time, like Louise, who lost her son Jean-François at one year old. Three or five days of absence didn't help her to recover from this very tragic incident in her life.

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I was thinking about this neighbour of mine who suffered from cancer not one time, not twice, but three times. She could have received the help of her family members, but this was not either in their collective agreement or in their work standard, where they could take a leave of absence, with or without pay, to take care of a family member without putting their job security in jeopardy.

Also, I remember these parents who had a very critically ill child. They needed to take time off to come to Toronto for a very specialized treatment, and they had to quit their job to be able to do that.

Bill 21 will help out these parents that I've mentioned, and others. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's great to stand up and talk to Bill 21. It's good to see it come back. There were some issues with it before the prorogation, and we're glad to see that some of the comments and recommendations that we have made as a party have been brought in.

I myself am from a family with a mother who's 95, and we're able to keep her at home. We're one of the few lucky families that have eight brothers and sisters in the area, who are required to clean the house or to take meals in every day. This is clearly something the vast majority of this province don't have access to or aren't lucky enough to have.

This is a required bill that will look after some of the needs as we try to keep our elderly parents and, actually, brothers and sisters at home. That's really where they want to stay. It's better for the province and better for the parents if they can remain at home as long as they can.

One of the deficiencies, as mentioned by my colleague from Oshawa, again, is that minimum of one week. I think that a lot of the events that we have to look after—doctors' appointments, or just different trips, maybe only shopping—don't require a minimum of a week off. To make it much more flexible, we think we would need to allow people to take that on a daily basis. It just makes sense, and I think it would help contain the costs of such a program and of the person involved as well. It's unpaid leave, and you'd want the flexibility to take the time as needed.

As well, it's something that we have to look forward to in the future. We want to make sure the rules are there to allow us to live in dignity and remain in our homes as

long as possible. This bill goes a long way towards that, and we're hoping to see some changes through the committee process so we'll fix this up. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for questions and comments in this round.

I return to the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the members from Oshawa, Beaches–East York and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for their remarks and comments on this bill.

One thing at the outset, Speaker: I noticed that pretty much everyone had a personal story to share. I think this is one of those issues that we all know about personally, either be it from our very own personal experiences of family circumstances or those in the communities that we represent.

I will say again, like I said earlier in my comments, that I think we have to draw on those personal experiences as we're debating this bill, because we will probably see a lot of those situations reflected in this bill. And if not—it will allow us to improve the bill. I've already heard a few of those comments, and I appreciate that, as to how this bill could be improved. I look forward, as the Minister of Labour, to working with the members from the opposition and members from the government side to see how we can improve the bill so that it does capture all the situations and the circumstances that we need to in order to look after our loved ones.

There are three different kinds of leave that are in this bill. One is the family caregiver leave, which is up to eight weeks of unpaid job protection. The member from Beaches–East York is right: That particular leave does not have employment insurance attached to it, and that's something that we are working on with the federal government. We're stressing to the federal government to extend EI protection, and I encourage the members opposite to write to the federal minister responsible as well, asking that EI protection be extended.

As for the other two leaves, which are the critically ill child leave and that leave dealing with missing or dead children because of a crime, those two leaves do come along with EI protection or a federal support grant, so there is financial support that has been extended through the federal government.

Again, Speaker, I look forward to the debate and look forward to working with all members. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 21 today. It was also nice to see the former Deputy Premier of the province, George Smitherman, here earlier this morning with a delegation of South Korean businessmen from Samsung and whatnot. I'm sure he's knocking on a few more doors around Queen's Park, looking to get a few more contracts signed up now, even though he's no longer in the House permanently.

When this bill was introduced, we had a number of reservations. When this bill was originally introduced, before prorogation, we had a number of reservations about that bill. As I mentioned when the minister first introduced the bill, there's a good way to do public policy and there's a bad way.

Fifteen months ago, the previous minister presented the previous bill, and we criticized it and we had reservations about it. We brought forward points that demonstrated that the legislation was inconsistent with federal legislation. It's nice to see that the minister, the new minister—not the new minister of the new government, but the new minister of the old government—has listened to us and has taken those thoughtful recommendations and suggestions into account. They did come back with a better bill, and of course they do deserve recognition for it.

But there are a couple of things in the bill that I think—I hope the minister will listen and the bureaucracy at the Ministry of Labour will listen—and that goes along with what some have already suggested about having to use it up in weeks instead of in more flexible daily periods.

Also, a week in the bill is defined as seven consecutive days starting on Sunday and ending on Saturday. This is just a little bit of a legal technicality, but as you read through the bill, it suggests—no, it doesn't suggest; it states very clearly, for example, that if you had a child who died, your leave would come to an end in the week of your child's death—just think of it—and you have to end that leave. If your child did pass away on a Friday or Saturday, Saturday would be the last of your leave.

I think there are really important considerations that we provide some flexibility in what a week is, and the terms and the criteria for this. I think it would be much better if we defined a week as any seven consecutive days or up to any seven consecutive days. I think it would be far more beneficial.

Speaker, I failed to mention that I will be sharing my time with my deputy critic for labour, the member for Chatham-Kent.

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It's great to see that the minister has listened, but they still need to do a far better job of listening. Take, for example, the treatment that this government is now subjecting our independent contractors to with Bill 119. Just a couple of weeks ago, we had over 500 construction contractors here at the Legislature, demonstrating and rallying against the new restrictions and costly burdens this government has placed on independent construction contractors, forcing them to buy needless insurance, doing nothing to help their safety—actually, doing everything to drive more people into the underground economy—and putting more people out of work. This is what this government is doing with Bill 119. Even though the minister spoke very clearly, in Bill 21, that they recognize that jobs, and skilled jobs, are exceptionally, fundamentally important, and suggests that Bill 21 will help this, at the same time, Bill 119 is destroying jobs, destroying independent contractors.

At that time, I gave the example of a young contractor from Hamilton. He's a young fella, 25, married, has a six-month-old daughter. He now has to choose between saving for his child's and his family's future—their education and their well-being—or purchasing unnecessary, useless, redundant, costly WSIB insurance.

I do hope the minister can take a few moments out of his busy schedule and actually look out the window, when there are hundreds of contractors demonstrating, and think of them and think of the people who work, and work hard, to pay the bills and help contribute to the social safety net we all think is so important in this province.

WSIB Bill 119 is about insurance, and of course Bill 21 is insurance as well. Like the member for Beaches-East York mentioned, the eight-week family caregiver portion is not part of EI; the other components are. And this bill now comes more in line and is more consistent with the federal legislation.

Insurance is what's supposed to cover us in events like family illnesses or tragedies. Our workplace insurance is failing our workers and our contractors throughout the province. That's why we on this side of the House, in both our white papers and in our private members' bills—we've introduced a bill that would not only repeal the onerous conditions of Bill 119, but also free up the marketplace and end the monstrous exclusive monopoly of workplace insurance by the WSIB and allow private sector insurers to compete and provide workplace insurance at a competitive price, and provide value to the people who would be obliged to buy insurance.

Of course, we know that whenever you get any monopoly, costs go up and service goes down, and the WSIB is no exception. We see them now with a \$14-billion unfunded liability, and there are those in the Liberal Party who would actually like to change the rules, which would increase it up to \$18 billion.

I was actually speaking, the other day, to one fella, Roger Tickner, who is a renowned safety expert in the province on insurance. He was telling me about how in 1984, he attended a meeting with the WSIB—the Ministry of Labour at the time—and they said they were going to get that unfunded liability wrestled under control. That was in 1984, and they were going to do it quickly and soon. That's only about 30 years ago, and what has it done but grown and grown and grown?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: They didn't do it under the Tories, too.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The minister is right. That has been all over all parties—parties on this side of the House—the third party—and the Liberals. That unfunded liability has continued to increase—

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and the minister are having quite an interchange here about blaming each other, but listen: How can you blame each other? We're all to blame for creating exclusive monopolies and allowing them to remain in force. It's not a case of just pointing our

fingers; it's a case of looking in the mirror and saying, "Let's fix things."

There's a real financial fiasco, debt-and-deficit debacle and jobs crisis in this province. The party opposite, the government, seems intent to continue. They don't really listen to the winds of change that are about their policies that continue to kill Ontario jobs. Two weeks ago, the Minister of Labour spoke in the House regarding repetitive stress injury day. I spoke that day as well, and I spoke about how our rules actually prevent us from progressing that day.

This was the story: I had an injury to my wrist that was aggravated. I was an electrician at the time, a member of the IBEW—the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers—

Mr. Paul Miller: A union guy.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I know the member for Stoney Creek would like to hear that, but anyway: At the time, whenever I used a screwdriver, this repetitive action aggravated the injury. This was back in the early 1980s. The union's prescription or remedy to it was to go out and get an expensive wrist brace fashioned up, which cost a couple of hundred dollars. I wanted to buy a battery drill, but it wasn't on the prescribed union tool list at the time, and they prevented me from using a battery drill. That would be too productive and prevent the injury, but they wouldn't do it, so spend a couple of hundred dollars instead of actually addressing the problem.

It's reasons like that—laws and rules and regulations like that—why we've lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs in this province since the McGuinty-Wynne government took power. Of course, they continue to kowtow with every union boss who comes to Queen's Park; I saw that, two weeks ago, they were having a good chat-fest with our friends from the Working Families coalition who came in to Queen's Park.

I do hope the minister does look at changing what a "week" is in the legal definition of the bill. I hope they do look at providing some latitude. That's going to be our position when we hit the committees, and I do hope that they take those considerations with good intent. I also do hope that the minister starts looking at workplace insurance in a broader sense in this province. I'd also like him to make some of those changes to our labour laws, as you mentioned, that he felt are so important—that we need to make sure that our skilled trades and our labour force grow, instead of its diminishing and shrinking role that it has had under this Liberal government. Things like the closed tendering that just happened, another closed tendering contract with the city of Kingston: All non-union contractors will be excluded from doing any municipal work in the city of Kingston, just like what happened to the city of Hamilton a number of years ago when the carpenters' union certified those guys.

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We also saw it with the TDSB here—the Toronto District School Board: closed tendering, where we saw those outrageous examples of \$150 to install a pencil sharpener or \$3,000 to install a receptacle. If I could have

got those prices when I was an electrician, I would never have ever dreamed of becoming a politician, I'll tell you—\$3,000 for a receptacle—

Mr. Paul Miller: You could afford that drill.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I could have afforded more than just that drill.

Interjection: And the brace.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I could have had the drill and the brace. At \$3,000, one receptacle a day—a week—would have been pretty bloody good work.

So I do hope the minister will take a look at that legislation and start providing some flexibility and options and not be so prescribed and regimented.

Our labour and our work really, truly is our most fundamental of human rights. This Liberal government denies so many of us that fundamental human right of our labours. Workers want a choice whether they're to be part of a union or not to be part of a union. I think it's time that we bring our legislation in line with the rest of the civilized western democratic worlds.

There's only one nation out of 47 in the European bloc that has labour legislation like ours. The Soviet satellite of the time, Belarus, still has legislation that is much like ours. All other western European democracies allow workers the choice to be a member of a union or not.

Allow members—our workers—to choose whether to go and be represented by a collective bargaining unit or to be included in the union. We don't. In this country, in this province, we don't allow people to have the choice. The freedom of association is denied and deprived to all of our workers.

I think it really is a shame that Ontario's laws are reflective of—similar to—a Soviet state when it comes to that, as compared to our European members.

Mr. Paul Miller: Comrade.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Yes. I know the member from Stoney Creek loves being called "comrade," but I kind of shy away from using that word.

But study after study has shown that giving workers a choice to be part of a union or not drives real wages higher, increases economic growth and increases employment growth. Those are the things that we need. Those are the things that we need if we want to have those social safety nets.

We shouldn't forget that Ontario's unemployment rate has been higher than the national average for over six years. Speaker, the Liberals don't really seem to want to fix the problems at hand. They just want to keep people out of work more than working.

But it was interesting two weeks ago when the Premier was going on. We know about all this new government conversation from the government, even though, as the member from Beaches so clearly pointed out, it's all the same members. They have shuffled a few of the deck chairs, but there's nothing new about this government. They're still travelling in the same direction, but now they're having conversations and respectful conversations.

They're having conversations, but who are they having conversations with? Again, they're having conversa-

tions with the Working Families Coalition. They're not having any conversations with the people on Amherst Island, who are furious with this Liberal government for imposing that ridiculous green energy wind turbine, industrial wind turbine, project on them. There's been no discussion with the people of Amherst Island.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to have to remind the member that we're discussing Bill 21. I would ask him to bring his remarks back to the actual content of the bill.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I'll just finish that thought and then connect it up here.

As the minister spoke, he said they've had all these conversations with people on the family caregiver act. I don't know if they have or haven't; I know that they have made some changes. What is also clear is, I know there's been lots of people wanting to converse with them over the Green Energy Act, and they haven't had a seat at the table, and there's been no repeal or any changes to the Green Energy Act by this supposedly new government—none whatsoever.

So, Speaker, there are things that need to be done in Bill 21. It is great to see that this government has finally—I think this is the first time in my six years here that I have seen a bill advanced by the Liberal government die on the order table through prorogation and then actually come back with changes, fundamental and good changes. I think that's the first that I can recall in six years. Maybe the member from Stoney Creek can correct me if I'm wrong on that. I have seen some minor changes in the committee process, but typically, we have seen this Liberal government just charge and ram straight ahead on their predetermined course, come—I can't say that—or high water; there was a word in there I guess I can't say. That is one thing, but I do believe that this bill will hopefully go through a fairly expeditious period of debate, move into committee, and that we make those changes as proposed by ourselves, proposed by the bill.

I do want to mention one other thing: that transparency is required in these discussions and in these bills. I think it's important that the Ministry of Labour look at that transparency throughout the whole labour portfolio, through all their labour legislation; that they start looking at their legislation, that it ought to be transparent; and, like this bill, where they have pulled it back and brought it back to make it more consistent with federal legislation, that they do the same thing with our other labour legislation with respect to things like union financial disclosure. We know that has changed at the federal level as well, and that there's a bill that has passed through the House, Bill 377 I believe is the number, that will make it mandatory for unions to disclose their financial activities. So I do expect that the provincial government will follow suit on union financial disclosures as well, just as they've changed this bill around to make it consistent with the federal legislation and the federal EI act.

I do have to make one other mention, Speaker. I was driving down to Toronto yesterday on my way from Lanark, and I took a little detour down Lakeshore Road near Port Hope. It was interesting. There's been a lot of

discussion in the House recently about gas pipes; I think we all remember that. But anyway, as I was driving down Lakeshore Road on my way to Queen's Park, I drove by this place called Wesleyville. Does anybody know about Wesleyville? It's a beautiful 1,700-acre Lake Ontario waterfront parcel serviced back in the 1970s. The Ontario government of the day had spent over \$250 million assembling that package—

Interjection: That was a Conservative government.

1520

Mr. Randy Hillier: It was a Conservative government. But due to the high cost of oil at the time, they never completed the job. They were going to build a 2,000-megawatt generating station in Wesleyville. Now, you can drive by Lakeshore and you can see Wesleyville. I put pictures up on my Facebook. It has all the signs: "Do Not Enter." "Unauthorized." And again, this goes back to the earlier discussion. But here, you know, all this discussion about where to put the gas plants—and I'm glad to see that the House leader for the Liberals is here, because he's been a great defender of the Liberal gas plant program. Why don't you go out to Wesleyville, House leader, and take a look at this marvellous package of land and buildings and smokestacks out there? Where we have, as a province—our taxpayers—paid hundreds of millions of dollars to assemble and build it, it lies dormant and decaying; it's a public asset that has been sitting for 40 years now. I don't know how many millions of dollars we're spending to keep it there, with maintenance and stuff—millions of dollars. Can you imagine how many people we could help provide for in the family caregiver act if we weren't wasting all our money, or so much of it, on these white elephants over on Lake Ontario?

Take a drive between Bowmanville and Port Hope on Lakeshore; I think you'll find it amazing. There we have an asset that is not used, that is sitting dormant, and it has sat dormant through successive Conservative, Liberal and NDP governments and it still sits there today. Why don't we realize some value out of that asset? Why don't we realize some value out of it and pay down our deficit, pay down our debt, maybe, just as a thought or an idea?

Or instead of relocating that Oakville gas plant from Oakville up to Napanee, Bath and my area, there's a 1,700-acre OPG site that's right in between, right beside the GTA: much closer, much cheaper. There would be less line loss. I think maybe the government House leader, in all his interest to defend the government actions, should have taken a drive on a Sunday afternoon to Wesleyville, and maybe he would have been scratching his head, saying, "Ah, that would be a good thing to do."

Mr. Paul Miller: You should have told him, Randy.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'm telling him today; you know, he's here today. He doesn't usually like listening, but I think today he's listening for a change.

So, in closing, there's a good way to do public policy and there's a bad way to do public policy. We have seen earlier with the previous minister, Minister Jeffrey, how bad public policy can be advanced and how it can be taken over. We've also seen from the government House

leader how bad government public policy can be advanced and defended. And then we can see how good public policy can be done. Good public policy does take consideration, does take an interest of the parties to actually be engaged in thoughtful discussion—not just pointing their fingers at one another, not just getting their backs up like the government House leader does during the gas plants, but actually having a discussion and realizing what the best value is, how to achieve the best value for our taxpayers and our residents, how we can get the laws crafted in a way that provides latitude and discretion, and achieve the things that we would like to do.

So this Bill 21 should serve as a bit of a lesson to the Minister of Labour. And I think what I can say in closing—I know the Minister of Labour has been in the news somewhat of late. I think maybe he read this bill before he endorsed it this time around. That I enjoy; I'm glad to see that. I think that's a good case in point for all Liberals, because I've seen it in the past. They obviously like endorsing things without actually reading or understanding them first.

Anyway, I think these are some good lessons learned. Now I'm going to be glad to turn the floor over to my colleague from Chatham–Kent to finish off. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker. I am pleased to speak to Bill 21 today, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), and to follow my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

As I'm sure you're all aware, this bill was originally introduced last session as Bill 30. I enjoyed the opportunity to speak to Bill 30 and outline a number of concerns that the PC Party and I had with the legislation, including the fact that this bill was tabled without any proper consultation with stakeholders or demonstration that there was actually a need for these changes.

According to ministry personnel, last year they had little or no evidence that there were people being denied time off from their employment to provide care for their loved ones. The Ministry of Labour staff also said that there hadn't been any significant demand for the legislation at that time. I wonder if there had been an increased demand or if the government was simply solving a perceived problem just for the sake of solving a problem. It's the illusion of action, Mr. Speaker.

Although I am unaware of the demand for this bill, I think it does have merit, and our debate last session actually proved to be valuable. You see, one of the few good things to come out of prorogation—if there is anything that really can come out of prorogation; anything good, that is—but one of the few things that would come out of prorogation was in fact the improvement of this bill. Somebody somewhere, at some time, was listening to our list of concerns last session and actually improved this piece of legislation significantly. This goes against the Liberal trend by eliminating inconsistencies

between the federal labour code and provincial labour laws, instead of creating a mess.

I'd like to congratulate the other side for finally listening to some of the concerns raised by the official opposition last session. Perhaps the government could incorporate some additional PC ideas and get this province back on track.

Speaker, as we all know in this Legislature, we are in fact facing an economic crisis in the province. If the Liberal Party were to take some of our suggestions, like they have on this bill, maybe we could finally get moving in the right direction.

We need to eliminate the deficit—they know that—and we need to bring down the debt; I hope they realize that. Here in Ontario, we are careening towards a \$30-billion deficit, and we're continuing to spend, spend, spend. To ensure that there is a health care system to even provide care for those who experience health care emergencies, and to have jobs for the loved ones to take a leave from, we have to get our fiscal house in order and our economic fundamentals right.

My colleague the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington made some very astute points about this government's unwillingness to listen when it comes to certain bills. While the government seemed to listen to our advice on the former Bill 30, it failed to listen to our criticism of Bill 119, as an example—the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act, 2008.

Mr. Speaker, as the deputy labour critic for our PC caucus, I'd like to add that it's not only the PC Party who was criticizing Bill 119. I'm not sure if you're aware of it, Speaker, but probably you are: Just a few weeks ago, there were hundreds of independent contractors who took the time to come here to Queen's Park and to protest the unfair and unwanted WSIB coverage that they're being forced into. They took time off—work, that is.

Essentially, that WSIB is a tax on independent contractors, who have to pay many times the amount of private insurance for less effective coverage under WSIB. That's all under WSIB: Pay more, get less. The failings of this Liberal government are once again borne on the backs of hard-working Ontarians.

1530

Now, I must ask: Why did this government listen to recommendations and adopt them in this new bill, yet fail to listen time and time again on Bill 119? Let me go back to Bill 21, the bill I'm fortunate to speak on today. Speaker, this bill has some positive aspects, and I'd like to address them. Our federal cousins have made numerous changes to the Canada Labour Code on the issue of caregiver leave, and it is time for Ontario to echo those positive changes. Many other provinces have similar legislation, with Saskatchewan leading the way with 12 weeks of potential unpaid leave.

For employees, the benefit of this bill is obvious. The ability to keep one's job but devote the time required to help a sick or injured family member or dependant is a welcome reduction of stress during a time of crisis. As a matter of fact, Mike from Chatham would certainly have benefited from this piece of legislation.

You see, Speaker, Mike is an only child. His father passed away when he was very young. Last year his mother severely broke her leg, and instead of taking up a hospital bed, she elected to stay home while her leg healed over the course of a couple of months. At the time, Mike was working and had to struggle to care for her while seeing to his work commitments. This created a lot of stress for Mike, as he tried to balance his responsibilities and also his responsibilities for his mother—she could see how hard her son had to work. Even a brief leave would, in fact, have assisted him greatly.

Employers can also stand to benefit from a well-thought-out, sound policy on caregiver leaves. Productivity decreases as employees struggle to cope with the stress and challenges associated with providing care for a loved one in need. You see, Speaker, what happens is they may be at work physically, but mentally their mind is elsewhere. Their mind is wandering. Their mind is wondering, “Who is looking after my sick, dependent family member at home?”

Beyond the legislation, many employers have already begun to work with their employees to provide additional access to benefits and services to assist them as they provide temporary emergency care for their families.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation does not live in a vacuum. It would be a disservice to the people of Ontario, and in particular the good people in the great riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex, to look at this legislation in and of itself. Let me be perfectly clear: I support this bill; at the same time, I have some overarching concerns. I’m afraid that this government will use this as a feel-good bill to pat itself on the back while the underlying problem goes unresolved. Any doctor will tell you that you don’t just treat the symptom; you have to treat the condition itself.

We all know that there have always been seen and unseen benefits and consequences of each and every bill passed in this Legislature. The seen benefits in each piece of legislation are held up as triumphs. The seen benefits are what families read about in the next morning’s newspaper. But I fear this bill will be used as something to point to as though the issue of health emergencies has been solved. While this bill represents a helpful small step, there is much more work that needs to be done. If this bill passes, and I hope it does, it will go to committee for further review and perhaps have a few amendments to make it even stronger.

This bill touches upon the broader issue of health care, and I think we should focus on this. In fact, I’d like to take a moment to shed some light on a significant issue in my riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex. Chatham–Kent residents in need of knee or hip replacement are being forced to wait for surgery they desperately need because of an inefficient and broken system. We know that. We know it’s happening. Some of my constituents may be forced to take time off work to help their loved ones before they can even have surgery. Well, what happens then? Would they be entitled to two separate leaves in this case? It is increasingly clear that there is a lack of communication between the Erie St. Clair Local Health

Integration Network and the Chatham–Kent Health Alliance.

Speaker, back in December, more than a dozen area people in need of hip or knee surgery complained to one of our local papers, the Chatham Daily News. They came forward and stated that their procedures have been put off until 2014 because of a lack of provincial funding.

As a matter of fact, my office went over to the Erie St. Clair LHIN, along with some of the constituents from my riding, and we actually had a meeting with the LHINs. Not a whole lot was resolved because of that, because the LHINs claimed they didn’t have any money to provide funding for knee and hip surgeries. But we put enough pressure on them, and, remarkably, they found some money to do a few more surgeries. That in itself is a triumph, but there’s still a broken system, because way too many people are still suffering pain and agony because of the need for knee and hip surgeries.

Speaker, 2012 was the second year in a row that our LHIN had prematurely run out of funding three months early, potentially causing an additional six-month delay to the already long waiting list. The same inefficient system is failing to provide adequate funding to those places that have available surgeons, facilities and, yes, beds.

It is these people who are most at risk of sustaining potentially serious injuries from a fall as they wait to receive care.

I’m sure that most families would prefer that their loved ones receive the care they need in a timely manner, instead of forcing loved ones to take unpaid leaves to pick up the slack for the government.

What is ultimately important is doing right by Ontario families. No matter the quality of health care in the province, illness and injury are unavoidable. Health care is a very serious issue in the Chatham–Kent–Essex area, as it is throughout this entire province, and it will only become a larger issue as the population ages.

Here’s something that we may find of interest, especially in that great riding of—yes, you guessed it, Speaker—Chatham–Kent–Essex. According to the 2011 census, the median age in Chatham–Kent is almost 44 years. The national median age is 40 years. Additionally, the percentage of the population aged 65 and over in Chatham–Kent was 17.9%, compared with a national percentage of only 14.8%. We have an aging population in Chatham–Kent.

It doesn’t take a doctor to realize just how significant these numbers are. Quite simply, our population is aging and it will take a collaborative effort to provide care for all Ontarians.

Our province needs a holistic approach that takes burdens off the system and allows families the flexibility to care for their loved ones, alongside a supportive health care system.

We need to have a serious discussion about what services will be in place to provide care for our population as more and more Ontarians experience health issues. It’s no secret that the number one expenditure of this government is, of course, health care.

For its part, this bill takes away at least one source of stress for loved ones going through health emergencies.

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When a spouse, a child, a grandparent or even a sibling has a serious medical condition, it takes a tremendous toll on you as you try to do everything you possibly can to be there for them. Oftentimes, people feel like they are being pulled in opposite directions between their work responsibilities and the need to be there for their family when times are tough. You know what they say: When the going gets tough, the tough get going. And people somehow find a way. But it's not fair; it puts undue stress and pressure not only on the caregiver, but also on the one in need of care. This bill ensures that Ontarians will not have to choose between a job and their loved ones, and I do applaud the minister for providing a sense of security for people who need it most.

At a time when we are in the midst of a job crisis, with over 600,000 people unemployed in this province, we can at least let those providing compassionate care for their loved ones know that they will not—and I repeat, that they will not—be added to this number. I'd like to mention that number again: There are 600,000 Ontarians who will see no benefit from this legislation. Why? The answer is simple: because they have no job to take a leave from.

As a Legislature, we need to do more to address the jobs and debt crisis here in Ontario. It would have been beneficial if the government was able to provide some statistics on how many Ontarians this bill could actually benefit, or any significant public demand for such legislation. To qualify for the leave, the employee must be caring for an individual whom a physician has deemed to have a critical injury or illness and cannot care for themselves. Again, I go back to the example I cited earlier. Mike from Chatham had job responsibilities. His mother severely broke her leg; she needed the care. Well, what criteria will be provided to physicians in regard to what exactly constitutes a critical injury or illness? Will doctors be left to their own devices to decide? I have every confidence in the physicians of Ontario, despite the fact that there is a huge shortage of doctors in the Chatham-Kent-Essex region.

Just recently, I was privileged to be doing some job-shadowing at the Leamington District Memorial Hospital, where I spent three hours in the emergency department working alongside doctors, triage nurses, volunteers, GEM nurses—these are the gerontology emergency management nurses. They, in fact, address and meet with every person who comes into the emergency department who is 65 years of age and older. It was amazing, the care that was being provided at Leamington by those people. They went above and beyond. Yet that entire region of Essex and leading into Chatham-Kent—there's a huge doctor shortage in there. I'm told that they're in need of over 100 doctors, just in Essex county alone. And of course, that also bleeds into Kent county, and of course the municipality of Chatham-Kent; there's a huge doctor shortage there as well.

Again, will doctors be left to their own devices to decide? Well, as I have mentioned before, I have every confidence in the physicians of Ontario. But you know what? I'm somewhat concerned with the potential of creating a system of varying criteria from office to office. We must do all we can to ensure that Ontarians receive uniform access to this leave of absence. By setting clear guidelines and requirements, we can ensure that this bill helps out those who truly need it and protects employers from those who may wish to exploit this law just to get time off. We need to give employees the freedom to act on their own responsibilities to their family, while at the same time protecting employers.

While care needs often increase during the last few months of a loved one's life, there is strong evidence to suggest that the length of time providing care can often exceed three years. This bill addresses part of the issue from a labour standpoint, but we must do more to assist those who require assistance for more than simply eight weeks.

Mr. Speaker, while there are certainly overarching concerns that cannot be addressed in one bill alone, I do look forward to this bill's progression to second reading and committee. Let's make a good bill great for all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments. Do we have any questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: I listened with great interest to the comments that were made by a number of members of the opposition about this bill. I think the most important comment that came through is the fact that the bill has taken into account some of the concerns that were raised when it was last introduced in the fall session, and we have a good piece of legislation—I think all members put that forward—which would benefit Ontarians.

It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that this spirit of compromise which has come forward cannot find its way into other aspects of the Legislature. I think I share the feelings of many people on this side of the House and perhaps even some across the way at our great disappointment when the Leader of the Opposition noted publicly that he and his party would be voting against the budget. The fact of the matter was that the budget was not even and has not even been written at this point, and we are undergoing right now consultations, both with the public and also with the opposition parties.

I guess when I hear the spirit of compromise that exists within the Legislature here today, I would hope that we could take that spirit of compromise to the next budget that comes forward. I know the Premier has reached out to both leaders of the opposition to talk about that. We have heard from the New Democratic Party various proposals that are under consideration, and I would love to see that same spirit of compromise with the Conservative Party and not have a Leader of the Opposition who stands up on behalf of his party and says that they're going to vote against the budget before it comes forward.

I'm pleased to see this spirit of compromise. I hope that it can extend forward. I also hope, Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as House leader, although we welcome all members who wish to speak on this matter to come forward, that we can get it to committee so it can have the type of scrutiny a number of the members spoke about, about some of the details of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to compliment the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington for his remarks as our critic, and the deputy critic from Chatham–Kent–Essex. I did listen to the minister earlier today. It seems, from my impression, that they have listened from the last bill presented prior to prorogation.

It's kind of alarming here to see the House leader from the Liberals today talking about our lack of ability to compromise. I think he should look in the mirror on that issue.

But technically on this bill, there were a couple of things I said the last time we debated the bill. One is the idea that you always have to take a week at a time. They've harmonized that with the federal bill—a good move. If you look at reality, for instance, say you had a member of the family who had cancer. They're disabled only to the extent their life has been altered, which is tragic in itself. But let's say that their inconveniences right now are just being escorted to the hospital for radiation or chemotherapy. You may only need a day off if it was a spouse, for instance. I personally know of this myself—for those particular occasions, to go with them and drive them to the hospital for these events, or for some other treatment, for example. But then you'd have to take a whole week off. The thing is, there's not one nickel of money in this from this government—there's not one nickel of provincial money in this, for this bill. The person has to take the day off without pay. Let's say a person is in sales or it's their own business where they're working, in a small business setting. I think they could improve this bill.

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The other one is that seven days are not entitled, because the week starts Sunday to Saturday. There's another case where someone in a bereavement situation may need seven days with a child in a situation that's described in the bill—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to speak and make some remarks from the members from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, Chatham–Kent–Essex, the government House Leader and the member from Durham on G21, the family caregiver leave.

It is kind of a unique time in this House; all three parties are talking like this bill might need some improvements, but it's one that should go forward. I think, having listened to the government House leader, who said he likes to see some co-operation—he wished there'd be more co-operation from this side, and how they've taken some good ideas. I hope he takes that to

heart, and that, when the budget comes around, they actually take some of our good ideas and actually put them in the budget. That would be pretty important.

Some of the comments from the member from Durham—I'd like to echo them, because I also know of cases where people don't need a whole week. They might need one day or two days, or two days a week for a longer period. By itself, this bill isn't that great, because there's no money involved for the people taking the time off. If it could be a bit more flexible, because we are dealing with families at their most vulnerable. When someone in your family needs your help, that's where this bill should come in.

Once again, I think we've all had agreement that it should go forward, but there should be some changes, at least, in this one. Although this isn't a monumental bill, it could make a difference in someone's life. I hope it passes this reading, I hope we improve it in committee, and I hope that, at least with this, we can make a difference for that one person or for the two people who really need it when they need it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's an honour to speak to Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2013. This bill is about compassion. This bill, if passed, would recognize the importance of family and job security by creating unpaid job-protected leave for hard-working families, whether it is to provide care and support to a family member with a serious medical condition, care for a critically ill child or just to take some time off to deal with the death or disappearance of one's child as a probable result of a crime.

I just want to highlight some of the reasons for this leave:

- family caregiver leave: Employees would be entitled to a new, unpaid, job-protected leave of absence of up to eight weeks, to be taken for certain specified family members with a serious medical condition each calendar year;

- critically ill child: Employees would be entitled to a leave of up to 37 weeks to provide care to a critically ill child;

- missing child: Employees who are parents of a child who is missing—and it is probable, considering the circumstances, that the child disappeared as a result as a crime—would be entitled to up to 52 weeks;

- deceased child: Employees who are parents of a child who has died—and it is probable, considering the circumstances, that the child has died as a result as a crime—would be entitled to up to 104 weeks.

I'm very pleased that many organizations have pledged their support for this bill, which include the MS Society, the Parkinson Society, the Alzheimer Society, the Canadian Cancer Society and the Canadian Caregiver Coalition. I'm sure that, as we move forward, there'll be other organizations that stand behind this very important bill so that we can help families in times of need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'd like to thank the government House leader for speaking to our turn to actually address Bill 21. Although he did use the word "compromise," I'm surprised he didn't use the word "collaborate," because when you compromise, that means you win-lose, and what we really want to have here is when you collaborate, you create a win-win—and that's a W-I-N win, I might add.

I also want to thank my colleague from Durham as well as my other colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane and, of course, my distinguished colleague from across the way on the government side from Brampton West.

Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, really is all about leaves to help families. As mentioned earlier, Speaker, we as a PC caucus are in fact going to be supporting this particular bill. I'm very, very grateful that although we had prorogation, which I'm not grateful for, during that time members from the government had the opportunity to review this bill and they actually listened to our concerns to in fact make it a better bill.

It's not a great bill yet, and I suspect that—provided this bill is passed at second reading, when it goes into committee, I'm sure that there will be a good discussion amongst all parties to look at it and say, "You know what? We've gotten this far. How much further can we go to make it an even better bill?" As a deputy labour critic, I'm concerned for employers, but again, my heart goes out to family members. We all in our lifetimes will experience challenges and issues of family members who do in fact require care, and that does put undue stress and pressure.

I look forward to the passing of this bill. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for further debate, I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Wilson assumes ballot item number 15, Mr. Hardeman assumes ballot item number 59 and Mr. Hillier assumes ballot item number 10.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

AMENDMENT ACT

(LEAVES TO HELP FAMILIES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT

LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI

(CONGÉS POUR AIDER LES FAMILLES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure to be here. It's a pleasure to speak on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party as our party's labour critic on the bill previously known as Bill 30 and now, in its most recent incarnation, as Bill 21, the family caregiver leave act, which is an employment standards amendment, 2011. I think for the sake of the viewers at home who have been listening in and those who are in the gallery today who may have lost track of exactly what it is the bill is intended to do—because the discussion has been convoluted, I would say. We've gotten on to different topics, ranging from—I've heard about wind turbines and cancelled gas plants. You could be mistaken here if you didn't know exactly what we were talking about. So I'll give viewers and other members an overview of this bill.

It is a bill that provides an unpaid, job-protected leave of absence to provide care or support to certain family members who have a serious medical condition. The bill is a very small positive step forward, but there will be relatively low take-up if the federal government does not change employment insurance so that caregivers taking advantage of the leave have some form of income.

The background on this is that all employees who are covered by the Employment Standards Act, whether full-time or part-time, permanent, short-term or contract, would be eligible for this leave. The leave is up to eight weeks. Also, the reforms to the bill from its previous incarnation bring in some other aspects that involve the disappearance of a child or the imminent health of a child; I believe they're two as well that are extended further than the eight weeks. It has been formatted to mirror federal legislation that has been recently changed. Those are about the only changes that have been made to it.

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Secondly, there will be no requirement that an employee be employed for a particular length of time or that the employer employ a specified number of employees in order for the employee to qualify.

A qualified employee would be able to take up to eight weeks per calendar year per family member, and here's an important point: A physician would determine whether the condition of the family member is serious, in the meaning of the act. In other words, the physician's recommendations trigger eligibility for the leave.

I had heard that there may be some concerns of abuse of this caregiver leave act. I think the fact that it's triggered by a physician's letter and acknowledgement that there is a family member who is ill and who requires special treatment should protect and should give members of this House some confidence that we could be protected from any abuse. Nevertheless, I think where the abuse lies would be certainly just in the implementation of the act, where employees actually require or are required to use the act or to demand its use. I'll touch on that.

But first and foremost, typically—what this does is it offers protection. It offers a worker, an employee, the ability to, upon acknowledgment from a physician,

request a set amount of time, up to eight weeks, to care for a loved one.

My colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex made note of our changing demographic in this province. I think that's ultimately what the impetus of this bill is, because we know we have a demographic that is getting older, that is living longer, thankfully, but that requires potentially some advanced or special home treatment that could be provided by a family member. That's what this bill, I think, attempts to address.

I think it's well intentioned. I think it's something that is almost what we would call a no-brainer, in the sense that who in their right mind—what employer in their right mind—would want to prohibit an employer from, or even punish an employee for, wanting to take care of a family member, or needing to take care of a family member, especially if it's under doctor's orders, if it's something that can alleviate that entire family unit's strain and stress, as well as eliminating the stress on our health care system?

Mr. Speaker, a family member who is providing care in the home of their aged parent, let's say, is one less health care professional, one less nurse professional, one less home care professional that the system needs to provide what we are assuming are basic functions. Let's also assume that these are things that could be easily performed by family members, such as blood sugar monitoring or the giving of eye drops into a family member's eyes. These are the things—the basic levels of care—that are identified in this bill that we think are important. So that's the one component.

The second thing, and the problem that we have with this bill, is simply that it requires the employee to take blocks of weeks at a time. So, again using the idea or the scenario of my mom, who requires cataract surgery, requires eye drops, I just need to go and get to her house to drop some drops in her eyes once or maybe three times a week during lunch, just to make sure she gets her drops while her eyesight comes back. I would then be required to take a full week off for what certainly would be only a five-minute process. I could not—I don't think anyone could—afford to do that.

So we're concerned about the overall take-up of this program when it should and could have some more flexibility built into it to be able to actually deliver on the intent of the bill.

We believe also that those are going to be the majority of the scenarios that we see if and when people do realize that they have this ability to leave their work for a period of time to deliver care to a family member.

Secondly, there's no financial envelope attached to this bill. That means, in politician speak, that there's no money for this bill. It is simply protection under the ESA. That means that your employer can't fire you if you have to go and deliver care to your family member, which is a good thing. Certainly, we need people to be protected and not to fear that they'll lose their job. But wouldn't it be nice if we could ensure that they weren't going to lose income, given that a family member has fallen ill, that

the employment insurance system could kick in and should kick in as it does on other issues of health care leave, whether it's pregnancy leave or parental leave, or family medical leave or organ donor leave or personal emergency leave or declared emergency leave. Those are areas where we've already identified that the employment insurance system can play a part in protecting a person's wage and should be able to do that. I think it certainly would be a positive and progressive attribute to our overall social safety net.

What I would say also is that this is a reform to the Employment Standards Act. On this side of the House, as New Democrats, we have many ideas where the Employment Standards Act could be reformed and should be reformed. In its basic form, the ESA delivers some fundamental protections to workers, but also, it falls short in protecting some of the most precarious workers in our province, those who, to this day, make up 37% of the workforce in the province. Thirty-seven percent of workers in Ontario are outside of the full-time model that we all used to know and love. We are now relying on part-time, precarious, contract, temporary workers to fill the gap.

Now, this bill does offer them protection—don't get me wrong. But how is it that those who, again, are already in economic peril in terms of the nature of their work, can then afford to take a week off without any financial—backstop, I guess I would say—there? These are issues that need to be addressed in terms of the protection that they have and the assurances that they have that they aren't being taken advantage of.

Another issue that's coming up very often, one that I touched on last week, is the use of interns as almost full-time employment these days. It's a problem that is being more and more recognized and pervasive as corporations realize that—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Welcome, Speaker. I'll let you get adjusted.

I was talking about the pervasiveness of internships, and not the historical use of an intern where somebody could get their foot in the door to gain exposure to an industry. We're seeing, more and more, the identified interns working for years at a time, having multiple internships and never being employed. And this is different from being a volunteer. You guys can come and cut my grass; that will be a good deed, a volunteer. But if I get you to do it every day for the next two years, that's work and that's something you should be compensated for.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Absolutely. What we're talking about is those young students, typically, who are saying, "Okay, internships: If I have to, if it looks good on my CV, I will do that." But less and less they're being protected. Actually, there is no protection for them because they're unclassified. So New Democrats have a lot of ideas on where the ESA falls short.

I got into the chamber here early enough to hear the labour critic for the official opposition rail against

unions, as he typically does. I would say it's entertaining, at the least, to hear him lambaste the union bosses and union workers who only strive to enhance their workplaces not only for themselves, but for others and for unionized and unorganized workers. I would say that that member operates in somewhat of a parallel universe to me. I've only known my experience in union environments as being one of being protected, whether it was my personal safety or whether it was that of my coworkers and colleagues and also of my family—to know that the job that I had was afforded benefits under a group benefit package that we all paid into through our dues and our deductions, and also job security under the collective agreements that we operated under.

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So, I don't know—I have a totally different experience: one that afforded me to raise a family; one that afforded me to have pride in the workplace, in my work that I did; and one that actually, I think, having been compensated fairly and justly and one that I agreed to by being party to a collective agreement, aided the overall economy. Because if I was making more money as a labourer, then I was able to spend more money in my community, at my small businesses in my small town and in and around the area. I would shop local each and every time that I absolutely could, something that—I think the opposition misses the entire point of having a collective that is able to bring itself up and raise its standards.

I think actually the Family Caregiver Leave Act has already been addressed in multiple collective agreements. It supersedes anything we've done. It's higher than the Employment Insurance Act. I couldn't point to any specific collective agreement, but I know these types of specialized leave issues have been addressed in collective agreements, and that's why so many times when we're looking for progressive labour legislation, we look at current, existing collective agreements that go well far and beyond what society normally is at, at that time.

I have to say that the member attributed trade unionism as—what did he say? It was somewhat of a social throwback: the USSR. He said something about the Soviet Union—again, why it triggers the parallel universe that I think he operates in. So what he's saying is that trade unions like the CAW, CUPE, OPSEU, IBEW, OSSTF, the teachers, the police, the firefighters, the nurses—guess who else has a union? The hockey players, the NHLPA; they decided they needed a union. The NBA, the NFL: Those guys needed unions, too. So those are “Soviet throwbacks.”

I would say that that member should sit in the nose-bleed section the next time he goes and sees a sporting event because those are workers.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's the only place most people can sit because of the exorbitant salaries.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, because they've negotiated good contracts and the fans get a good product, except for the last couple of days, but they certainly have had some good entertainment coming out of Toronto here, with the Toronto Maple Leafs, and I wish them well in this shortened season.

Back to the point, the Family Caregiver Leave Act: We're not too sure if there's significant demand for this program. As was mentioned, what we think is that those who are going to be potentially caring for their aged family members will make up the majority of those who take it up. But the broad demand, especially to necessitate a massive amount of contention or debate or anything in this House, I think, is unwarranted. Again, I mentioned it should be a no-brainer; it's one that I think all members can support in terms of the intent of the bill, and it should not be contentious. But we're concerned that there won't be enough people to actually make it worthwhile.

I hope the government is cognizant of that, and I hope that they do some advertising or some promotion of this to ensure that people understand that it's out there. So many times there are programs that are developed with all of the best intentions, but yet the take-up is just not there because people simply don't know that it exists. It's one of the aspects that I think—actually, one of my private member's bills that was introduced last year did that, in terms of informing workers of their rights under the Employment Standards Act, where it should be posted in each and every workplace. Those are things that I think are just basic, fundamental responsibilities that the government should have and can play a role in.

I mentioned flexibility. Ultimately, let's talk about how people get to the position where they need care. As I said, we're living longer. We are aging more and more, hopefully in our homes, but we also face more complex medical issues than I think we ever had. Along with those complex issues come complex levels of care. My point is that the government should be responsive to that and understand that as it does make up the bulk of our spending here in the province, and I would assume throughout the Commonwealth, let's ensure that we have a proactive, preventative model and we're doing everything we can to allow people to live healthier longer.

It's not good just to live longer in your home but be suffering from a chronic illness or disease. Let's try to eliminate that or alleviate that as best as possible. That means addressing some of the core issues of a civilized society. One would be the social determinants of health: poverty, access to food—to nutritious food—access to exercise and the knowledge that exercise and preventative health care actually alleviate the burden on our health care system.

What we've seen is a shift. I'm not going to blame it on you as a government, as I am so often inclined to do. I'm not going to blame the societal shift of getting away from physical activity and moving toward fast food—I will blame that on an influx in pressures of corporations.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: What about Mike Harris?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No, I'm not going to blame it on Mike Harris either—he's so convenient to blame it on. But what I will blame it on is potentially just our reality as human beings in this era where we are bombarded by fast food; we're bombarded by easy access. But are we actually inclined to take the healthier route? Are we

promoting the healthier route? Are we ensuring that those who are marginalized, those who are having a difficult time escaping the grip of poverty in this province, are given the support to be able to stay healthy?

One of the issues that is raised quite often in my area, in working with anti-poverty activists—I'll give them a shout-out: Pathway to Potential and my good friend Adam Vasey, who is doing a remarkable job in Windsor, and his volunteers and support sphere. They've talked about putting food back in the budget, which was removed, I believe, in the 2008 budget, if my colleague Mr. Tabuns can recall?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Nope.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It was removed. The \$100 special food allowance was removed from those on social assistance, and it has reverberated through those low-income Ontarians. They are no longer able to meet their dietary needs. They no longer have access to fresh, affordable fruits and vegetables, and that produces a downstream cost for us.

Why am I talking about fruits and vegetables when the bill addresses care for a family member? These are the determinants of health. These are things that can avoid our even needing to use a bill like this. If we can ensure we have done all we can to eliminate the hideous disease that is diabetes—

Interjection: A little upfront investment.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: A little bit of upfront investment goes a long way. A pound of prevention—what is the old adage?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Thank you, my honourable colleague from Toronto—Danforth, who is health-minded, who understands the adage, who actually applies it to his own lifestyle, as we all should and I hope we do.

But this is ultimately about protection under the Employment Standards Act where workers will now have the ability to provide care, and I think it's a worthy endeavour. It's one that I think acknowledges one of the most basic impulses of humanity: that if your family member is sick—someone in my family, or my friends, any one of our loved ones—and we have the ability to take care of them and provide care, we will do everything we can do. We will, of course, jeopardize our own employment. This is what the bill does: It says you won't have to jeopardize your employment; you will be protected for at least eight weeks. Whether that is long enough or too long or too short, I guess, is up for debate, as we see the evolution and implementation of this bill, but it's a start. It's one that I think is worthwhile, and it's one that I don't mind and I don't think other colleagues mind adding their support to, and that is, of course, exactly what I will do.

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Mr. Speaker, I'm always proud to stand in this chamber as a 35-year-old New Democrat—35, can you believe that? I know.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Proud? Yes, I am. I'm 35 years old, always knowing and carrying the legacy, championing the cause of one of the founders of our party, Tommy Douglas, the initiator of universal health care in Canada.

I'm making the link here between the principles of doing what you have to do as a family member and doing what we should do as legislators—the principles of universality, the principle of taking care of one another regardless of your social status, or your economic status, or your spot on the economic ladder. It should be a basic fundamental tenet of our society that no Canadian, no Ontarian, should lose life or economic ability because of illness or injury. This ties along with that. Yet I think we have strayed away from that principle over the years, Speaker. Governments have taken their eye off the principles of universality and the positive aspects that come with a system that actually doesn't have profit built into it, a system that is focussed only on delivering a high level of care. What has happened is that because that model is so efficient, they have taken money and spent it in other areas that have not proven to be as efficient. As a result, we have been faced—and not only this province but other provinces—with budgetary constraints that have left them scrambling.

It's unfortunate. Where do we turn to find remedy to a system that was built to succeed, the universal health care system? We turn to the private sector. So often that system, especially when intertwined with health care, does not deliver adequate results, and it certainly doesn't deliver them in a fiscally minded framework.

I call on the government to recommit itself to the principles of universality. I believe this act, again, is trying to connect those values to the law under the Employment Standards Act—and one, as I have mentioned, that I'm fully willing to support.

Later on this week, I plan to address an issue that I think all members in the House are facing, one that comes from the elimination of the Special Services at Home program. Speaker, I don't know if you are aware of it, but young people in this province who are disabled and who have been under the Special Services at Home Program are now, as of January 1 this year, cut off completely from any support. We are dealing with a system that on the surface says, "Yes, we understand that family members require support if they are ill," but when there's money to be attached to it, when we need to actually back that sentiment up with some money, well, the purse strings are cut, the wallet is clamped shut, and the money has dried up.

For families like the Chauvins in Stoney Point, Ontario, and Joe Chauvin, who is an 18-year-old, beautiful young man—his mother presented at the finance committee in Windsor on the effects of the Special Services at Home and how absolutely detrimental that was going to be to their family. The father has now realized that potentially, with this service being cut off and being put on a wait-list for the Passport program, he may have to quit his job. He may have to exit from the workplace and the labour market in order to care for Joe—and who

could blame him? That's what I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker. Who could blame him? Who could blame us, if we need to?

I have two beautiful kids. They're the most precious things in my life, and I would give up everything I had to be able to care for them if I had to. Thankfully, I don't. Thankfully, we have a health care system that is there. Thankfully, we have programs that are in place. But if we don't keep our eye on the ball, they're at risk. They're at risk because when governments get in trouble, where do they run? They run to the health care system to make little cuts. It's death by a thousand cuts. It's not right and it's not fair.

We can find efficiencies, and I certainly did do that, as I had the same experience that many members had over the last couple of weeks. I don't know if anyone partook in the Take Your MPP to Work Day with the nurses in Ontario, but I did and I was able to tour Windsor regional, Hôtel-Dieu and the Windsor teen health centre. I was exposed to so much of what our front-line workers are doing in this province to find efficiencies and to find mechanisms that will not only save the system money but also deliver an enhanced level of patient care.

The answers are found right in our communities—or can be found, rather—but I guess there are bureaucratic walls and lines of communication that don't necessarily actually intertwine. So often, those good ideas get lost that could certainly pay dividends. In some cases, what it came down to was simply logistics, simply space and the reorganizing and proper planning of space in our health care system that actually could deliver efficiencies—downstream, interdepartmental—and provide us with a system that functions properly.

But sometimes it takes investments, and in an era where we see cutbacks and closures and the elimination of beds, and actually the elimination of nurses too—the laying-off of nurses—how does anyone have faith indeed that the system will be getting better?

We need a government that is ready to back up its intentions with some tangible support. Everyone else is getting the support, but it seems as though those who don't need it are the ones who are getting support: the insurance companies, the banks. They're doing all right. The pharmaceutical companies as well are doing pretty damn good. But yet the people in our ridings, Mr. Speaker, are the ones who are suffering, more often than not.

I think this debate has been going on—well, we know how long it has been going on: over a year. Unfortunately, due to prorogation, it died in the last session, one that I had hoped this bill would make it through; one that saw, I think, all-party support, even given the fact that some of the mirroring legislation wasn't existing. Those are things we could have done, I think, within the timelines, had it been sent to committee.

Thankfully, I think it's well nuanced and ready to go to committee—something that I think should happen without any further—

Hon. Mario Sergio: Delay. Any further delay.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: —any further delay. Merci, monsieur.

It should happen expediently, and it's one that I'm prepared to support quite immediately.

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Speaker, we can continue to take half measures, or we can actually realize that when we analyze an issue and analyze a problem, it might very well be more effective and more efficient—cost-effective—to address it wholeheartedly from the get-go. More often than not, that again means attaching and having financial support behind these types of initiatives. I can only imagine how much benefit it would deliver to those families that ultimately are going to take this up if they knew that a portion of their income was supported, as is the case under the employment insurance provisions under other medical leave acts. I can only imagine how absolutely thrilled someone would be to know they could afford to take this time off.

Many times, Speaker, I have told the House about my brother, who was injured in a mountain biking accident in 2005 and became a paraplegic as a result—sorry, he's a quadriplegic, not a paraplegic. Sorry, Eddie. But he's a wonderful inspiration, Mr. Speaker. He's a high-functioning quadriplegic—I guess that's why. The level of his injury was at about C7. But because he was a fitness professional and continues to be a fitness professional, the high level of his injury has actually allowed him to be one of the more higher-functioning quadriplegics that, I think, anyone has ever seen. He can do things that normal quadriplegics can't do, not only himself but, as I mentioned, as a health and fitness professional who continues to train individuals in his community.

He receives support in British Columbia—maybe I failed to mention that he lives in British Columbia. About three times a day he has somebody come over and support him in his home, to help him transfer if he's transferring from his bed or whatever, also to help around the house, just to do some of the things like laundry. Those are important things, especially when hygiene is important to your overall health—if you are compromised or if your health is compromised, keeping a tidy, orderly, hygienic place. That's a role that I'm hopeful this bill addresses. Eye drops and other medical procedures are something important that I guess we're under the understanding this bill will address, but it could very well be that somebody just has to go and do the laundry at their mother's house or has to do the dishes or has to prepare that dinner. These are important things.

I'll get back to my brother, Mr. Speaker. He's a high-functioning quad because he took such a proactive approach to his health—one of the fittest individuals I've ever met in my entire life, and still continues to be. Because he was so healthy—the injury he sustained was catastrophic, there's no doubt, and continues to be—he is higher-functioning, meaning he is lower-demand, I guess. He doesn't need some of the more—

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Extensive.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: —yes, extensive medical supports that other quadruplegics might. It's a case study in proactive investment, whether it's a proactive investment financially or a proactive investment in your health—just in taking basic care of yourself—and I think we can do more of that.

We can identify areas where the government can promote that in our communities in our province. One of the ideas I've always had was to incentivize, either through tax code or other, people taking up a fitness regime. Join a gym, and let's support you in doing that. These are ideas that I guess I'll wait till I'm in government and can start to initiate as a member of the government side. They're good ideas, and I'll give them to the government. They can take them. But they're initiatives I would like to see as proactive measures that have some support behind them, because that's the only way you are going to get take-up on these types of programs.

Mr. Speaker, again, I said I don't want to delay implementation of this bill any longer than I have to, and I don't think I'm going to. I'll leave some time on the clock, because I spoke to this when it was originally initiated—

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: You're up, Mario.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And that's a heads-up to the government side—I've spoken to it throughout the two-minute hits that we do. I appreciate the comments of all the members; I appreciate them staying on topic, on some occasions. I appreciate my caucus, who, as well, have fully researched this and scrutinized the bill. We certainly are prepared as a caucus to support it, but let's do it as quickly as possible. Let's ensure that politics doesn't once again create a logjam in this House. Let's actually prove to the people of Ontario that our intentions are sincere, that we can do something collaboratively and provide that security and support that is built into the Family Caregiver Leave Act and also start to then address some of the other low-hanging fruit that I think we can all find consensus on.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the time that you've given me, and I appreciate the deep attention that has been given by my colleagues as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mario Sergio: It was a pleasure to listen, and I listened very attentively, to the member from Essex making remarks on the reintroduction of Bill 21. It is good to hear that he's supporting it and that his caucus that he is part of, that they are willing to support the bill as well.

As well, I have the desire and the wish to see it go through as expeditiously as possible. As you know, Speaker, we have this legislative mechanism in this place—it doesn't work as quickly as we would like it to sometimes, but at least it is a good sign that this is moving forward. I'm very pleased that the Minister of Labour has introduced this particular bill at a very appropriate time, I have to say—a year ago would have been better, or two years ago, maybe, better, but I guess it's good to see that it is here.

There is nothing better as legislators than to show compassion when some of our Ontarians are dealing with a very severe family situation. This bill does not address if it's a father, a mother, a husband, wife or whatever—any member of the family that needs particular assistance, the content of the bill will make that provision. This is an important time to recognize the need to do something, especially in the economic situation that we find ourselves in. Imagine the pressure that this would bring on a family member with respect to choosing either continuing working or assisting someone that is very sick at home.

I think it's good to see this going through, and it's good to hear that there is support in the House for Bill 21.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to comment on the member for Essex and his speech today. Earlier we had the pleasure of listening to our labour critic from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, as well—Mr. Hillier.

It looks like we're going to support the bill. They've made some changes in the bill since the last time. It's sad and somewhat bittersweet that we're debating this bill again, going through the whole process because of the shameful act of the first half of the McGuinty-Wynne government—the McGuinty part of it prorogued the Legislature back in October when this bill would have been closer to getting put through to fruition and could've been, probably, enacted by now already.

There are a couple of things that we're not entirely satisfied with in the bill. One of the things that we're concerned about is that it's eight weeks of leave, but it still has to be taken in increments of one week. In some cases where someone, for example, is being taken for treatments for a critical illness—cancer treatments, for example—they may not need a week; they may need a couple of days. I think we should have that flexibility so that it helps the people who need it the most, and that is the people who are being taken care of by another member of the family. I think there is some work that can be done on that, and perhaps at committee we can get to that.

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At the same time, this is something that I think we have to recognize. More and more family members are going to be taking a greater role in seeing that those who are ill get the care they require, and they're going to be a bigger part of it. This is a step in the right direction, and we'll be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'd like to touch on two points. One will be the idea of enforcement of this act. Secondly, one of the comments that my colleague brought up was the idea of proactive investments, and I'd like to touch on that.

One of the issues that does come up, though, is that if we pass this bill—and it looks very likely that we will

pass it, and it's a supportive bill for the people of Ontario—already we see lacklustre enforcement when it comes to labour laws and labour regulations. I'll quote someone from the opposite side, from the government, who made a great quote. The former Ontario labour minister, Minister Bentley, stated, "Rights without remedies will not be rights for long. Remedies that are not used are not remedies at all ... a more effective approach to ESA enforcement is long overdue."

Essentially, if we entitle a family to a right, but there is no remedy if that right is breached, it won't be a right for very much longer; it won't be a law that has any meaning for very much longer. So I encourage us in this bill to look at enforcement as an essential component by making sure families can actually make use of this time to provide care for their family and their loved ones—that there is some enforcement that employers are required to do this, and if they don't, that there is some remedy for those folks who may lose their job if they take time off.

Briefly, I want to touch on the idea of proactive investment. I think in many, many areas in Ontario, in our government and in the policies that we present, we could do a lot more if we invested up front and there was a little cost for a great savings in the long run. There are many examples, and my colleague from Essex brought up the idea of disease prevention. We're talking about caring for people who are ill, but if we put some investment up front, they wouldn't get ill in the first place. Diabetes is a great example of something that's completely preventable with good nutrition and great exercise, but there has to be some opportunity for folks to be able to exercise and have good nutrition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today and make remarks about the remarks that were made by the member from Essex. I think the bill we're debating today is one that I hear all three parties are going to support.

It was interesting to learn a little bit more about the family of the member from Essex, but this bill is about some of the things we don't often think about. This bill is about things that we hope never happen to us. We're talking about if somebody in our family gets really, really sick; or a child gets really, really sick, gets critically ill; or a child goes missing—a child just disappears one day, or, in the worst-case scenario, a child passes away as a result of a crime. These are all things we don't like to think about, and certainly they do happen to individuals, as much as we wish they didn't, from time to time. It strikes me that the last thing you would want to be thinking about at that time is, "Do I get to keep my job? Do I get to keep getting paid?"

In this case, what we're saying is that you get to keep your job in the province of Ontario, and we're very specific about the time that that job is protected for: eight weeks for somebody in the family; 37 weeks for a critically ill child; up to a year for a child who goes

missing; and, for a child who is killed or dies as a result of a crime, up to two years.

It's no wonder that a number of societies have endorsed this: the MS society, the Parkinson's society, the Alzheimer's society, the Canadian Cancer Society and the Canadian Caregiver Coalition.

I think the remarks that came from the member from Essex were very balanced. I think the ones that showed support for the bill probably said that there were some other things that could be done to make it better, and there's nothing wrong with that; I think that's often a valid criticism. But now that I'm hearing that all three parties are supporting this bill, it's good to see the House working together again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's it for questions and comments. We return to the member for Essex for his reply.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I thank the colleagues who have commented on my submission on this bill. It is good to feel as though the Legislature actually functions from time to time. That's ultimately what we're here to do: to scrutinize law and realize its effect on the people of the province. I think this bill will provide that in those very rare instances where—admittedly, hopefully, rare; we would hope no one ever needs to take up this bill, but the protection under the ESA will exist. I hope it opens up a broader dialogue on other areas within the Employment Standards Act that we can find consensus on.

I think if members take a close look at the gaps that currently exist under the Employment Standards Act, they would realize that not only are we addressing areas of inequality or inequity or fairness, but we could be addressing areas of productivity. Many members have mentioned here today, "How could someone perform their job?"—indeed, if they knew that a family member was at work, "How could you perform it to the full scope of your ability if your mind is consumed with a family member's health?"

I think there are other areas where we can ensure that members can concentrate on their workplace and not necessarily feel as though there are threats outside of their employment that may jeopardize that. It's called job security, employment security. These are issues that many in our province who are in precarious working conditions—you may have heard me say that many times—currently experience, and one that I think we can address wholeheartedly in this House.

Thanks again, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address this. I look forward to continuation of the debate in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased, again, to recognize the minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Speaker. It doesn't happen very often to get time in the House. As you know, the legislative agenda is so big, so wide, and there is only so much room for members to participate in the various debates, especially in today's debate. It's one of those debates that it's a pleasure to listen to members

of the House when they acknowledge the benefits of the bill, which the content would bring to our people of Ontario.

Bill 21, as was introduced today—the amendments to the bill today, Speaker, by the Minister of Labour indeed bring good news for the people of Ontario.

I was alluding to the member from Essex, Speaker, and he made a lot of sense when he said this is one of those bills that we wish we could move along as quickly as possible, especially when we have some of the rare moments when we have unanimous consent, if you will, from all members of the House.

It is one of those bills which calls for special attention from each one of us in the chamber and addresses some of the very painful issues or situations that sometimes we don't want to talk about, that sometimes we think will never happen to us or one of our family members or a close friend—but indeed, it's for real. It doesn't matter who it happens to, Speaker. All of us will suffer the consequences because it's expensive as well.

What is important to recognize, Speaker, is the intent of the bill. What the bill intends to do is to bring some peace of mind to someone who is caught in a very particular situation at a particular point in time in their lives—that at least they will have to deal with whatever issues they are facing, but their job is safe, even though they don't get paid. So if it's a family member that they have to look after, if it's a child who is severely ill and requires an extensive period of time, if it's a situation where a child, for example, goes missing because of a crime or what have you, the bill addresses that particular aspect. In the case that a child is lost or is dead due to a crime situation, then that period of time is extended.

1650

In every case, we say up to a particular time, someone would be entitled to have some time off to deal with that particular situation and to have the peace of mind that they can say, "Well, I don't get paid, but at least I can take care of the child, the wife, the father, a family member, and know that I have eight weeks off to think about it"—or up to eight weeks. I mean, these are guidelines and, as the member from Essex was saying before, we would like to see the bill moving along, going through the routine as we normally do, going through committee, and we hope to get an even better bill when it comes back.

The up to eight weeks—it is in there as a guideline, nothing more. The bill by itself, Speaker, is called family caregiver leave, and it would entitle someone to an unpaid, job-protected leave of absence of up to eight weeks to take care of some serious medical conditions.

In the case of a critically ill child, the employee would be entitled to up to 37 weeks. They don't have to take the full 37 weeks because, as the bill says, this will be an unpaid leave. But at least they would have the 37 weeks to provide care to the critically ill child.

If we are dealing with a missing child, then the employee who is the parent of a child who is missing would be entitled to take up to 52 weeks. Again, they are

entitled; they don't have to take them. It may be up to the economic situation of that particular person or family. But it's there, not only to give them peace of mind, but to deal sufficiently and efficiently with whatever particular family situation they are dealing with.

In the case of a deceased child, especially if the situation occurred due to a crime, then the parent would be entitled to 104 weeks, Speaker. Again, let me say that this would be an entitlement, but they don't have to go for the full period.

The bill has a lot of support because I think we all understand the compassionate feelings that are attached to the content of the bill. Who would not understand the particular situation of one of our fellow Ontarians in a particular situation and not feel compassionate about it? The MS society supports the bill very strongly. The Parkinson Society supports it as well, Speaker. The Alzheimer Society of Ontario supports it. The Canadian Cancer Society supports it, Speaker. The caregiver coalition supports it as well.

I know that our employers would be very amenable to allowing one of their employees to take time off and look after a family member—a child or any other family member.

Speaker, I deal with seniors in the ministry there, and I can see how deep the needs of looking after our seniors are, even when they are not in a very particular situation where total care may be needed.

Yes, we have those facilities—thanks that we have those facilities—where we can take our relatives, father, mother or whomever—at a nursing home. But sometimes we have to understand that you don't have to be a senior to be caught in a particular situation. It can be at any time, and even seniors who are still active and are living in an environment where they feel comfortable, their own home—I think we should do as much as possible. It's never enough, but I think we have to understand that a senior would feel nowhere better than in their own home, their own environment. I have to say that we have done quite a bit to see, indeed, that seniors will get the type of attention, the type of care, when they need it, if they need it.

It is good to know that there are alternatives. But considering our seniors just as one of the groups in our society—they need to be taken care of. We know they are living longer. Yes, they are living longer, and while they are living longer, we'd like to see them living better. I think it is a wonderful gesture of every member in the House, that we'd like to see that, indeed, our people are living healthier and living longer. If you cannot live healthier, Speaker, it's no fun, and being a senior as well. But at least we can address the various programs, the various plans, to assist our seniors to live well.

That is why not too long ago—and I'm pleased that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is here. We have addressed one of those issues that seniors like very, very much. In other words, if your condition does not allow you to go to your family doctor, well, you will have a doctor come to your home. If you cannot go and

visit the nurse, a nurse will come and see you at home. If you need a therapist, yes, indeed, a therapist will come and visit your home.

I think these are some of the things that distinguish us as Ontarians, as Canadians: taking care of our people, our seniors. Often we forget that—and I really don't like to say the word “senior” that much, Speaker. I would rather say our “aging population.” Our aging population is living longer, it's living better and it's living more actively. They are more engaged. I think these are some things that often we do not recognize: How wonderful it is to see our seniors aging, living longer, living healthier, living more engaged, participating in more varieties of activities, more volunteering in their own communities. I think we have to recognize the value that they bring economically and socially to our province and our communities.

I don't think there is a college, a classroom, a teacher or a professor that can match the experience that our seniors bring—a lifetime of experience. I don't think anyone can match it. We should find a way, every time possible, to harness that experience and put it to good use in our community.

But we already have a lot of seniors in our province who do exactly that. Because they are living longer, because they live better, because they are healthier, they contribute—without compensation, I have to say—to the well-being of our communities. If we had to put a price on that, we couldn't. So it is in our interest to look after this particular fascia, if you will—bundle of people—in our province and see indeed that they are well looked after, that they live better, that they live longer and that they live happier. They are entitled to live with dignity.

1700 I'm going to pick on the seniors because they are easily recognizable. We are going to be judged as legislators and as members of our society partly on how we treat our seniors. I believe that our community will partially judge us on how we treat our seniors. If we treat our seniors well today, it will be the footprint for how seniors of tomorrow will be receiving care. So it is important that we do that.

I believe firmly that, in appreciating our seniors to the end and the experience they bring, we could say—I could say, and I'd like to believe that I am right—that they are the ones, the people, the mentors of our next generation. I believe that our seniors today are the mentors of the next generation, and we should use that. We should use that for the betterment of our next generation and for ourselves today.

I don't have to tell you, Speaker, that by 2017 we are going to have more Ontarians over the age of 65 than Ontarians under the age of 15. Where am I going with this? If we don't take care of our seniors, which is going to be this massive, large population in the next 20 years, the expenses to us, to the government and to the people of Ontario, are going to be tremendous. So it is in the best interest to look after the needs of our seniors today and the health care of our seniors today because I think it's going to be better for any government in the future.

Myself, I always had a very weak spot, if you will, for the very young ones and for the seniors—for the young ones because they need care, they cannot look after themselves; and for our seniors, or the ones that are aging very gracefully, because that is the time that we need to recognize and we have to appreciate the contribution that they have made to our society.

I do a lot of speaking with seniors; I speak to a lot of groups, and you know what? If there is one simple thing that they expect from us—from their politicians and from their legislators—it's just to recognize, to appreciate, who they are, what they are and what they represent, that acknowledgment, Speaker. They know that no government can do everything for everyone, including our seniors. The best they can expect is that we do our best for them. But when we can't, and then they cannot receive what they want, at least they recognize us for what we are. I think that is the most noble thing that we could do as politicians. Joining in that, if we can do anything to improve their life, to extend their good stay in our community, I am sure that not only are we doing the right thing, but also the benefits will be accruing to us as politicians and to the rest of the people of Ontario.

Time is getting short, Speaker. I'm grateful for the time that you have allowed me to speak today. I have to say to the members of the House that I'm very grateful to hear that they are supporting the bill. They would like to see it moving forward, going through, and I do hope that everyone will have the opportunity to address the bill, to bring some new ideas and make it even better. I have to recognize the Minister of Labour, who has very expeditiously reintroduced this particular bill in the House. We are all anxious to see indeed that the bill will travel, will have some, I would say, extensive consultation with the various stakeholders, and then bring it back to the House for some concluding remarks and passage.

I note that the Minister of Labour was in Ottawa today, launching the bill itself, if you will, and why not? I think it has wide support among the various communities, labour groups and other stakeholders. What is important to know is that we have not received any complaints from employers, after all, and I would hope there's less and less numbers of cases where the bill may apply. It would be wishful thinking to say it is good to have the bill but there is no need for it. The thing is, sometimes it's good to have it and not use it, instead of not to have it and have a need for it.

So we are here, Speaker, and I look forward to this bill going through and receiving extensive consultations. We'll look forward to input from the members of the House, from the two opposition parties, and let's bring the bill back to the House for quick approval and bring some much-needed relief to people in Ontario. Let's give them peace of mind.

It has been recognized as a small step, but it is a good step. So let's see if we can take a giant step and bring this bill to a happy conclusion. Let's see it go through, as it's a good bill and will go a long way in helping bring some tranquility, peace of mind and rest to our people in Ontario.

Speaker, I thank the members, I thank the Minister of Labour, and I thank you for the time you have allowed me to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's important to get up and respond to the minister's comments today. It's important that this bill brings Ontario's legislation in line with the federal legislation that was passed some time ago. We would like to see some important flexibility put into this program, because it is fairly restrictive in the time frames, in the fact that you have to take a minimum of seven days off where, as we heard today, many times maybe it's only a day that you need. But I guess the overall goal is important. It's about keeping seniors in their homes, allowing that to happen.

It's interesting that the minister talked about the importance of quick approval. Bill 30 was a first attempt. Of course we had many recommendations, and they could have been handled through committee. But this government chose to prorogue the Legislature, and of course we're now going back and it has to be reintroduced and go through many of the steps it had already gone through, and many bills could already have been passed by this time.

We'd like to see it get through—there are some important things. Everybody's goal is the same. I think we heard today that many people, like myself, have elderly parents at home and we need the flexibility—ourselves or our family members—to be able to keep them at home, because that's where they want to be. They're happiest there, and really the province should be happiest if we can keep them in good health and give them the type of life they want to lead.

Again, we're looking forward to taking this to committee and making some needed changes to get the legislation out. We have a desire to see this get through, and I think the third party does as well, so this should slip right through without too many problems. Again, we look forward to this, and think it should have been done months ago.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again it's an honour to be able to stand here and speak about Bill 21 in response to the minister and in response to the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Speaking on this, this afternoon, I think we're all kind of getting a sense of déjà vu, but it's not really déjà vu because we've all done this before.

1710

This is a case of a good base of a bill. Is it earth-shattering? No, but on occasion for the people who need it, it could be. But this is also a case of, this bill could have, at first or second reading, gone to committee and been passed.

Unfortunately, for whatever reason, the government decided to prorogue the Parliament, and here—

Interjection: Oh, there was a very specific reason.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, I know, but I'm not here to accuse the government of what we feel they—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm here to say that this bill, in its past introduction, was a victim of that decision. Some of the people who could have been impacted by this bill in that time—I'm sure there were people who could have been impacted by this bill in that time—were also victims of that decision. This time—and it's a rare occasion; it's not often, I think, that all three legs on the stool of Parliament here actually are saying, "Let's let this one go forward, and let's do something with it." The base is there, and the people are also there that we need to help. This one, in its present iteration, is not going to cost anybody—or at least this House—any money.

So let's move it forward; let's make some changes, because there are good changes that could be made; and let's use it as a template to see if maybe we can get some things done in this Parliament if we actually work together.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise again on Bill 21 and speak to the comments made by the minister responsible for seniors, who I think did a very good job of explaining why this bill is necessary.

I think there are a couple of times when you know you've probably got a good piece of legislation. One is when one party thinks it's going way too far and another party thinks it's not going far enough; chances are, if you're in the middle there somewhere, you've probably got a good piece of legislation.

The other time is when all three parties agree; when somebody brings forward a piece of legislation to the House, or it comes forward to the House, and all three parties say, "We'll support this. We think it's a good piece of legislation. We'd like to see some changes; we'd like to see it improved. We'd like to get it into the committee system. We'd like a whole lot of things. But basically the concept is a good concept."

What people may not understand at home in TV land is that there are a few gaps right now in the Employment Standards Act. Right now, a person in Ontario is protected—their job is protected—if they have somebody at home they're caring for who may be in a palliative situation, but what they don't have right now is protection if that person is critically ill, the possibility doesn't exist that they could perhaps pass away in the next little while. What this does is it extends that provision.

Also, the federal government has passed some legislation called the Helping Families in Need Act. It has introduced some new employment insurance special benefits for those people who are looking after a young one at home. What this does is it matches up the provincial legislation with the federal legislation, to ensure that not only are you paid during that period when you're looking after a critically ill child, but your job is also protected. Unpaid job-protected leave for employees in federal

jurisdictions, banks, airlines, things like phone companies and cell companies, that type of thing, is also protected.

It's a good piece of legislation. All parties agree with it, and I think it just brings us into line with the federal protections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, listening attentively to the minister responsible for seniors, I've had the opportunity of addressing and bringing forth to this Legislature my thoughts with regard to this particular bill. It's unfortunate that this bill didn't have an opportunity to get to committee, but of course we all know the history, and that was that former Premier McGuinty decided to hide—but you can't run. The problem is that he prolonged. This should have been handled a long time ago.

Again, what I do appreciate is the fact that the government, over that period of time, have gone back to the drawing board. They've revisited this particular bill. They've looked at it and said, "You know what? Maybe there are some other things that we can do. Maybe we can incorporate some of those ideas that the official opposition had brought forth during debate the last time this bill, when it was known as Bill 30, was brought to this particular Legislature." It's very encouraging to see that.

Of course, when there is a vote on second reading, it is my hope that this bill will in fact be passed. As we have been listening to my colleagues throughout the Legislature, it will go into committee. I think that even though this is a good bill, in committee it will have an opportunity to become an even better bill, with perhaps some additional amendments that will be brought forward.

Again, one of the other things: As we know, this particular bill affects the Employment Standards Act, 2000. Of course, what we are hoping, and we'll see, is that this legislation, if passed, will take about six months after royal assent to in fact give employers time to adjust their employment policies as needed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We return to the minister responsible for seniors for his reply.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm very grateful for the generous comments from the members from Stormont-Dundas—South Glengarry—that's a mouthful—Timiskaming—Cochrane, Oakville, and of course Chatham—Kent—Essex.

I was very pleased to hear the member from Chatham—Kent—Essex say that, yes, it's a good bill, and we hope that when it comes back it's going to be a better bill. I think it's incumbent on every member of the House, especially those belonging to the particular committee that will be delving into the content of the bill itself, and those people that will be part of the consultation, to indeed bring it back and bring a better bill. The people of Ontario are going to be the beneficiaries of an improved bill, and I think that's an intent of every member of this House.

I have to concur with the member from Oakville when he addressed the fact that this bill is to fill a particular

empty spot, if you will, or to fill in a gap which is not currently covered within the Employment Standards Act.

As well, I think the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane addressed the fact that this is a companion to the federal bill. Speaker, it's good to see as well getting provincial and federal governments agreeing on something of importance. When we see, for example, bank employees, airlines and telecommunications, this very wide field, they also will be enjoying the benefits of this bill.

So, Speaker, let's move it on. Let's bring it back. It's never too late. Let's approve it and bring something good for the people of Ontario.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Natyshak assumes ballot item number 12 and Mr. Mantha assumes ballot item number 13.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT

(LEAVES TO HELP FAMILIES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(CONGÉS POUR AIDER LES FAMILLES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 21, Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2013.

As with most things that I'm going to bring to this House when I speak, I always try to look for balance. I look to see and make sure that we're doing things that are the right things for the people of Ontario, the people that we are all given the privilege to serve. In this case, I think it has been good. There's compassion on all sides. All three parties are virtually singing from the same song sheet. I think one of my colleagues from the third party said that's very rare, that the three legs of the stool are always underneath that seat. It's very good to see that. I think this is one that we certainly all need to work on. We need to move it forward as quickly as we can. This is a time for a family when they are in distress. They are in a very significant, challenging period of their lives, and they only add stress to their life if there's a fear of not having a job there.

So how could any of us really dispute that? How could any of us really stand in this House and say we don't want that to happen? You need to have a sense, when you're caring for a loved one, whether that be a child, a parent, a sibling, your wife, your spouse, that you are going to be able to dedicate every single hour and every single minute of your energy to their care and to get them

better or through a process, particularly in the case when there has been a death in the family—a horrible, horrible circumstance.

1720

It's great to see that the bill has come back. I don't normally say much glowing about prorogation, because I think it was ill-advised, it was deceitful and it was the wrong thing to be done, for partisan reasons. But in this case, I think there has actually been an improvement to the bill. When it was first introduced as Bill 30, there were a lot of holes in it. It was a poor piece of legislation, and my understanding is that it was rushed to the table. They didn't give it true thought. They didn't really go out to the stakeholders. They really didn't consult us or the third party to get our feedback. So it is probably a good thing that we have brought it back to the table to have further discussion and further debate. It's a much-improved bill.

I do, however, have a couple of things that I still hope—when it gets to committee, if the vote takes it to there—that we will look at. One of those is that it says, “An employee may take a leave under this section only in periods of entire weeks.” The people in the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound who have actually spoken to me about this bill have concerns about that. That actually adds a bit more duress, because they may only have limited time: They may only need to take half a day off or a day off, or a couple of days consecutively, and then they can get back to work. The employer is going to be happier, because that seasoned employee is going to be there, doing their job as effectively as possible. But in this case, it says you shall take a full week. What if you need a ninth week—some time with your loved ones? You need to understand that there needs to be still some more flexibility built into this.

I think most of us with aging parents or children know that you don't always get sick a week at a time. You may have a couple of days and then not need anything for three weeks, and you want to be able to take it.

I think it should be accumulative over that eight weeks. I don't think the one-week time frame—similarly, I think there's a clause in there that talks about seven consecutive days, Sunday to Saturday. I believe my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington pointed out very astutely that if, for example, your child was to be deceased on a Friday—the week ends on Saturday, so that's saying you only get that one day. That obviously just doesn't make sense, Speaker.

Obviously, we need to all take a look at this and ensure that we're tweaking it more, so that we get what we need out of this bill, so that it really benefits everyone.

I'm going to give credit to the Liberals for doing this. They actually have brought back what I would suggest is a much better bill. They actually have listened, and I give them full credit for that, because again, to my first comment, we should be bringing legislation that is about people, for the people, to the benefit of people, and forget the partisan stuff. Certainly, through all the colleagues

that have spoken from all three parties today, I think we're on that same mindset, and that's really good. So I'm going to end my support and my giving of credit there.

I'm going to ask a few questions, though, because there are some other daunting things that I think are out here. This is a very important bill, but I would suggest to you that—why did they not listen to the Green Energy Act? Individual health concerns, community health concerns and economic health concerns that truly are going to decimate this province if we don't turn that bus around pretty soon are looming, leaning—they're glaring in the face of all of us every day, and yet there's no discussion. There's no willingness to open up, although we hear every day in question period, typically from the House leader, who answers on behalf of the Premier, “We want to have some conversations. We want to work with the other side. We want to do the right thing.”

This one is going to put the stress back on a lot of these families, because they're going to lose jobs. They're going to lose jobs at a time when maybe they do have an ill parent that they need to be taking care of. We need to have more discussions on things like the Green Energy Act, in the same way this bill has been constructed, where they actually listened to the concerns and constructive criticism and said, “Yes, we hear what you're saying. We need to back up from there.”

I believe the member from Oakville used a reference: One opportunity for good legislation is, if one group is way, way over here and one group's way over here, probably somewhere in the middle is good legislation. I would suggest to him that, again, the Green Energy Act is a prime example. There's a group way over here—them—that have just got the blinders on, and they're driving. I don't want to bring in any references to the horse racing industry they're going to decimate, but they have blinders on.

There's a party over here that's saying, “You know what? We care about the people, we care about the health of this province, and we're not going to give up until we actually get this thing turned over.”

Speaker, I go on to ask again, “Why not?” about horse racing? Some 30,000 to 60,000 jobs are at stake—again, those very people who aren't going to have a job to use this caregiver act, because they're not going to have any jobs. Yet they won't listen to that. They won't step out.

Now, they've talked a little bit about the lottery and, “We're going to tweak a little bit.” But they've already done a huge, insurmountable amount of damage to an industry. A lot of people have gone to the States already, and it's going to be tough to ever get them back, particularly if they keep going down this road with the blinders on.

Why not more listening about the gas plants? Just in this House today, we found out, in the last couple of days—\$828 million is the number that's being shared, and they're still sticking on that \$40 million and/or \$190 million, for a total of \$230 million.

All we're asking from the people of, certainly, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and I believe most of my colleagues' ridings—Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, Chatham-Kent-Essex, the duke down there from Haldimand-Norfolk, Christine from Whitby-Oshawa—we just want to be able to work for the people. We want to work as a collective 107 people when we're all here—to be elected for all of the people of Ontario.

These gas plants—it is Project Vapour, because the vapour keeps coming back, and it gets worse as it comes.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a bad-smelling vapour.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a bad-smelling vapour in many cases.

Interjection: Mess up; fess up.

Mr. Bill Walker: When you mess up, fess up.

We just want to have some honest discussion. We don't want more redacted documents. We don't want more whiteout. We don't want to hear all the rhetoric. What we really want to do is, we want them to listen in all situations.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask—

Ms. Soo Wong: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member on a point of order.

Ms. Soo Wong: I would like to ask, Mr. Speaker, through you to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound: What does his comment just now have to do with the bill before us? I don't know what gas plants have to do with family caregiver leave. I just want some clarification, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I appreciate the point of order, and I would remind the member that it is necessary to bring his remarks back to Bill 21.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd be absolutely delighted, Speaker. It's great, because I think I've got about 12 more minutes and I can use all my time on this issue, if you like.

I would like to share with you that the whole context of that whole comment is about jobs. The care leaver act is to allow people to have time off from a job. But if you keep decimating our province through poor energy policy, we're not going to have any jobs to need to worry about a care leaver act. The only leave act we're going to have to worry about is all the people exiting to other provinces because they are the ones that are booming and Ontario isn't.

I do, Speaker, have a great opportunity here to expand to the member opposite—and I'm pleased at any time to reach across and have a conversation and share with you that your policies, in many cases, are driving—you're decimating our province. You've doubled the debt. The deficit—you're spending more every year than you bring in. That just can't be sustainable. How are we going to have any jobs to have a care leaver act to use if we continue to decimate and go down that path?

I think this is a very valid point that the member opposite—and I really appreciate that she has brought it up. It's really back to the fundamental principles of what we have been talking about, even before—I think it was

“prorogation,” that word was—where we spent four months. I went home and worked just as hard for my constituents. But do you know what? The issues didn't go away. They're still here. All we did was we deferred that time. But in that same time, 600,000 people are unemployed. The debt is still insurmountable; you doubled it.

Speaker, this comes back very specifically to jobs. A care leaver act is to allow people to go off with unpaid leave to care for a loved one, from a job that they actually have to have to pay their bills. But if we keep decimating all the big industries—energy, health care with the boondoggle of Ornge and all the money wasted there, the eHealth boondoggle and the billions of dollars wasted there. If we had all that money, we'd actually have more jobs and this act would be even more beneficial to the great people of Ontario.

Speaker, I just can't let go of this one. Bill 17, the WSIB insurance act—forcing people to take insurance, that there's really no choice, so once again we're saying, “We know better, and we're going to tell you you're going to do this, Mr. Small Business.” There were 500 people on the front lawn two weeks ago, and I believe the minister who is introducing this bill didn't even have the courtesy to come out and speak to those people and at least validate where his thought processes were coming from. That, again, ties back to jobs, Speaker, or the lack thereof that we're going to have if we keep going down this poorly-thought-out—although I don't think there's any plan over there. I think it's just cracking it out on the back of a napkin as each crisis unfolds. “We try to go into spin mode and try to get back out of that.”

From our perspective, it all comes back to the fundamental of having good, reliable jobs: then, people pay taxes; then, there's money for the programs that we actually want to provide for the great people of Ontario.

So I'm bang-on with all of my thoughts. I think that this all does come back to the care leaver act: to have the ability to take off from a job, but you have to have a job to do it.

Interjection: Caregiver leave act.

Mr. Bill Walker: Caregiver leave act; thank you very much. I just wanted to make sure everybody in the audience was listening.

Speaker, there's Bill 5, the public sector wage freeze. Again, why would they not listen to that? If we don't soon get this debt and deficit situation in order, there's not going to be anybody left in Ontario to work to pay any of this off.

1730

We again as a party—my colleague Mr. Shurman from Thornhill—brought legislation to this House, and I believe it actually passed second reading, if I recall. I think that was a Thursday afternoon, very late, and a few members of the opposite side apparently didn't think it was that important and didn't show up. It's great for us, because now we can open up those lines of dialogue; they keep saying that they want to have conversations for the benefit of the people of Ontario, which gets back to

jobs. We all need to have funding to be able to have the jobs.

At this point, for the life of me I can't understand why we can't have some discussion. The House leader stands up almost every day and says the same old thing: "Done, done, done." Do you know what we're coming to? We're coming to the end of Ontario as we know it: done, done, done. We need to ensure that everything we do in this House is collaborative. We need to be speaking for the benefit of and always putting first and foremost, as the primary concern, the people and the taxpayers of Ontario. This act is a pretty good act, now that we've actually brought it back with some amendments. I think there's still some more to do that we can do. I think we will probably, as a party—my colleagues who spoke to it today certainly seemed pretty supportive of it.

But we need to always come back to the essence of what we're talking about. We are a government. Our duty, our obligation, is to work as 107 representatives of the great people of Ontario. We need to bring legislation to this floor to be discussed in a timely manner. We shouldn't be proroguing just because of partisan political gain. This act actually probably could have been implemented if we hadn't had that four-month break that one side decided to do on their own in this House, of their own volition.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Run from the truth.

Mr. Bill Walker: Run from the truth, one of my colleagues says. I don't want to really go down those slippery slopes. I think the people of Ontario have cottoned on. The media is certainly getting on to this. We know what the damage is going to be, hopefully, if they will give all the documents at some point down the road.

This is a good example; they actually listened, and I've given full credit to the Liberals today for actually listening for a change on one small, little piece. But as I mentioned earlier, there are a number of pieces of other very, very important legislation that they have given no time for, no willingness to talk about. They don't want to talk about the Green Energy Act. They're not willing to concede that they had a terrible, misguided thought process. They tried to sell the buzzwords of "clean," "green" and "free." If you really look behind any of that hyperbole, it's not clean, it's not free and it's not green. They're actually turning off water in Niagara Falls, which is the cleanest, greenest and most economical. I don't even know how they get their environmental stance from their perspective, because it's just running us down into the ground. It's just crazy.

This global adjustment fee again is going to have a huge impact—and I come back to jobs. This global adjustment fee, if it gets to where they want to put all of their energy on the renewable side—and we're certainly not a party opposed to renewables. What we want is renewable energy that's actually going to work for the people, be cost-effective, be efficient for the businesses and attract people who might want to invest in the great province of Ontario, or actually add staff or add another wing to their factory or their small business, or add some

apprentices. We've talked about apprenticeship ratios in here, trying to bring the new, young, skilled labour force, which we're going to need. We see a looming crisis on the horizon. In fact, we're probably at the precipice of that today. Yet they're still pushing back at every opportunity to have these "discussions" and "conversations" to try to find legislation that will work for all of the people of Ontario.

The essence of what I'm trying to say today is that I've given them credit where credit is due. On this bill, they've done pretty well. I'm still quite concerned. I'm not certain why—and maybe one of the speakers after me will be able to stand up and say why—they're so beholden to this full seven days, and you have to take a week at a time. I'm a little bit perplexed. Most of our lives aren't quite built in week blocks, particularly when it comes to illness or injury or the tragedy of a child or a loved one. So I think that one definitely needs to have a fair bit of discussion before we go too far down the road. But I do want to get it to committee. I think all three parties are willing to do that, but then we need to expedite it and we need to get back to some of these other ones. If we can get this through in a timely manner, we can get back to talking about things like the Green Energy Act, horse racing, the gas plant fiasco, the Ornge fiasco and boondoggle, the WSIB—are you seeing the picture here, Speaker, that I'm creating for you a little bit?

This isn't just me; this is a lot of people across our great province who are bringing these things to my door every day. They're emailing me, they're calling me. This is what the people of Ontario are concerned about: "Where are the jobs going to be? Where am I going to have the chance to use the caregiver leave act if I don't have a job tomorrow?" I think I referenced maybe once or twice already, but I'll just throw it out there in case Hansard didn't catch it: 600,000 people unemployed, with 300,000 in our manufacturing industry alone. And what are we doing as the government to actually bring that back? We're continuing down a path of exorbitant—we're going to soon have the highest energy rates in the continent of North America. We used to be the proud leader in Ontario, with the lowest rates that attracted new development, new capital, new investment to our great province. Now, who would even think of coming here from that perspective?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The decimation of Ontario.

Mr. Bill Walker: They're decimating. They've taken us from the engine to the caboose, and they're not prepared to turn those things around.

Mr. John Vanthof: You still have a train.

Mr. Bill Walker: Yes, at least we still have a train. My friends in northern Ontario are still struggling with that one, but that's another conversation. I think they'll hire a consultant and, "We'll get back to you." I think the buzzword is, "We can do better." Well, yes, again I can concur, they can and should do better on many things.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: But they won't fess up when they mess up.

Mr. Bill Walker: That's correct.

Again, we go back and all of these types of policies should be a little bit modeled after this one. They actually took in some consultation from us in the opposition and the third party and said, "Hey, you folks over there actually do have some good thoughts. Maybe we could work collaboratively, put a bill on the floor and we could actually move that through this House and enact it, so that actually the people who are paying the freight for all these services and programs get the benefit of it."

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The bill won't cost Ontarians any money.

Mr. Bill Walker: That's what we're here every day for. And yes, a very good point, my friend from Chatham-Kent-Essex, Mr. Nicholls. It won't cost the taxpayer a dime. What a novel idea.

I wonder if any of these other ones that I mentioned could ever be anywhere close to that. Do you think the Green Energy Act's going to cost us any money down the road?

Interjection: It has cost us.

Mr. Bill Walker: Oh, "has"; good point. What about the decimation of the horse racing industry and those 30,000 to 60,000 jobs? How about the \$828 million—it'll get to a billion, I'm sure, by the time we're done. The original numbers that were being given by some of the experts in the industry were a \$1.3-billion boondoggle. Think of the health care, think of the education that we could provide. Think of the affordable housing and the social programs we could pay for and provide the people of Ontario with if we weren't wasting those billion-dollar boondoggles.

What if we saved \$2 billion a year with our across-the-board wage freeze? I don't think anyone I've talked to in the public sector right now has said to me, "You know what? We get it. We understand. We're in a heck of a financial crisis after eight years, almost nine now of this Liberal tax-and-spend government. We are in a serious financial, fiscal situation, and we're prepared to hold back"—the only people it seems who aren't are the people across the aisle, the government, the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals. Probably some of the NDP may disagree with that. They might jump on that same train.

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: But, Speaker, I'm not going to let the sidebars interrupt me. I'll keep going because I'm trying to stay focused on this bill and what this bill will mean to the people of Ontario.

It's great to have caregiver leave, if you have a job. We need to listen more about the integral things that are prohibiting those jobs from being created, or in fact they're driving them out of our great province. We need to always come to the table with the people of Ontario, the taxpayer, the constituent, our next generation, like our pages sitting in front of you, Speaker, who are our future. We need to make sure that we're always putting them first and foremost, and every policy we bring into this House should be crafted with them in mind. Is this a good use of dollars? Is there benefit out of this? Is it

efficient? Is it timely? Can we all agree as three parties to get to that same common goal and leave our partisan things like prorogation and taking prorogation for granted in this great institution?

Speaker, we have to continually strive, as the other speaker says, to raise the bar. All three parties need to raise the bar. We need to all come into this House every day with the future in mind: How do we turn today's mess into tomorrow's hope?

We need hope. We need hope for things like the caregiver leave act. We need hope for jobs. We need hope to get out of debt so that those kids have a future to look forward to. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments? The member for Toronto-Danforth.

Interjection: Strong finish.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Strong finish.

It's my honour to follow the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. As has been said by a number of people today, it appears that there's general consensus amongst the parties that this bill should move forward, that it should go to committee. I would say that, although this may not be the position of the government, on this side of the House there's also consensus that this is a very small step indeed.

As my colleague from Essex has said, we are in a province where employment standards are often undermined by a lack of enforcement, so that those who take advantage of this legislation, if in fact an employer decides, "We don't want to have that person gone for an extended period of time. We're just going to replace them. We're going to bounce them and let's just roll with it"—this act is not going to protect them.

1740

There's no question: If you don't allocate the money for enforcement so that someone who is taking advantage of this act actually has protection and support when they try to hold on to their job, if they are unfairly treated—if that's not there, this act will be a dead letter.

The minister responsible for seniors' issues talked about the need to look after seniors. Speaker, if children of those seniors don't have income support to take the time off work to help their parents and their grandparents, frankly, again, this piece of legislation will be a dead letter.

I think it would be great to have this bill go forward to committee very quickly. We've had a debate on this already. Everyone knows where we need to go. Let's go to committee, amend it as necessary and get it in place. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to respond to my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound with regard to Bill 21.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker: His concern about the province having no jobs, or the deficit of jobs—well, I want to remind the member opposite that we have in-

creased employment by 380,200 net new jobs since 2009. Ontario has recovered 143% of job loss since the recession. So I don't know what data he's talking about.

With regard to this bill, I'm very, very pleased that our government and the minister are able to reintroduce this particular bill with respect to not just family caregiver leave; it's also dealing with children with critical illness, as well as children—because of death and disappearance.

At the end of the day, we are here to serve Ontarians. We are also about compassion. How do we reach out to serve the community as best we can as a Legislature, but also extend a hand when it's most needed, especially in a time of crisis? As a registered nurse, I know that every day, having been a nurse at the front line, dealing with critical care, and the families of lost loved ones—this Legislature has an opportunity with this particular legislation to provide the support at a time of need.

Furthermore—and I heard my colleague from Toronto–Danforth just say—almost all the speakers today have definitely indicated support for the bill. More importantly, the time debate is one piece, but moving forward, we also have to have more conversation about the caregiver piece. At the same time, how do we address the concerns that some of the members have? By moving this to committee, I think it's the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's an honour to get up and speak to the comments made by my learned colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I think it speaks a lot, the way he paraphrased something I've heard: "Jobs, jobs, jobs." I mean, we hear something on the other side, but I think that's really the message we should be working on.

Interjection.

Mr. Jim McDonell: They can't say, "Jobs, jobs, jobs." I hear the stats—they seem to refer to StatsCan—and it shows that we've had higher than the Canadian average in unemployment for—six years?

Interjection: Sixty months.

Interjection: Seventy-eight months.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Yes, 78 months. I mean, that doesn't talk to what we hear about the jobs that are created. Actually, we lost another 50,000, some 48,000 last month. Every time you turn around, there are more jobs being lost. I guess the answer of hiring 300,000 public servants may look good, but somebody has got to pay for that; the private sector has got to pay for that. We're going to lose another 60,000 in the horse racing industry.

We aren't listening to the Auditor General's report when they talk about the Green Energy Act and what that's costing the province. We lost 700 jobs out of Timmins, moving to Quebec because it's just a better deal, because they can't afford the electricity.

It's time that this government listens and wakes up to some of the things that are going on in this world, instead of spending money. The answer was, "Well, let's

prorogue Parliament, and maybe nobody will know what happened in four or five months."

But the people who haven't got the jobs—600,000 people who are waking up without a job today—they're remembering and they see what's happening. They really don't care about this bill, because they don't have a job to worry about going back to. I think that's what we have to start worrying about: what's good for the province. The examples we have about waste in this government—eHealth, the gas plants—everything is in the billions of dollars. If it's not a billion dollars, this government is not interested. It's just waste, waste, waste. Maybe that's the new phrase they should be coining.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to stand up on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane and speak for a few moments mostly on the comments from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

This bill is different than any other bill since I've been here in this short time. I was trying to picture what it is: This one lacks the poison pill. There's not something in this bill that you really hate, you know? No, really. Like with the air ambulance bill—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no, with the air ambulance bill, with the no Ombudsman or with the protection for whistle-blowers. Now I know in reality whistle-blowers aren't protected, because in my riding, there's those nine people. Two of them have already lost their jobs for blowing the whistle, and now they risk losing everything because they're being sued with public funds.

That tells you that, although they talk about whistle-blowers, you're not sure if the intention is there to save them. But here in this bill, there isn't the thing you just go, "ugh." You actually don't cringe when you read this one. You can say, "Okay, we can live with this and we can make this one better."

Does it solve all our problems? Does it solve our job crisis? No. Is it a bill that will be the cornerstone in the next election campaign? I hope not. But it isn't the typical bill, where we say "Gee, we could live with half of it, but the other half, oh my, we just can't live with it."

This one, we can move it forward and get to help the people it's going to help, but there are huge problems in this province to fix.

Every time I get up, I'm going to say something about whistle-blowers, because they aren't protected in my riding. Those people risk losing everything by being sued by public funds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues from Scarborough–Agincourt, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and Timiskaming–Cochrane.

I'm going to return for just a quick second here. The member from Scarborough–Agincourt, I think, made

some comments and asked a couple of questions. She talks about increased jobs, but what she leaves out very pointedly is that most of those are public sector jobs. Government is not in the sole business of creating jobs. That's why we have a private sector; that's why there's private investment, you know, those types of things we need, too.

She doesn't know where we get the facts. We kind of ask that question every now and again about the gas plant fiasco, because I think we had 20,000. They said we had them all. Then we get another 33,000. They said, "Now you've got them all." Then we get another 600 the day after the new minister said, "Absolutely, you've got everything." Then they were redacted, whited out, and parts were missing.

So I think we're really in a better position to be saying we don't have the facts. But at any time, I would like to reach out to that member and say, "I'd have a one-on-one with you at any time. Stop just listening to the left-leaning media. You'll see the facts. The truth will set you free if you're willing to look."

The other facts that I'd like to bring is that the party opposite, the governing party, in the last nine years did something that no other government in the history of our great province has ever done. They doubled the debt in eight years: \$411 billion staring us in the face. What future do we have for our young people if we keep doing that? It's no different than anybody's home budget. If you keep paying all your money to the debt, you never get out of that hole; you keep digging it deeper.

I spoke about jobs. I'll continue to speak about jobs because if everyone has a job then we all thrive, then we all prosper, and then we all have the education, the schooling, the health care that we have and the social programs we all want. But if we don't have jobs, it's a death spiral going the opposite way. So every chance I get in this House to speak, every chance outside of this House I get to speak, I'm going to be very critical of the government of the day, the Liberal Wynne-McGuinty government, who have decimated this province.

This caregiver leave act is only good if people have jobs to be able to take advantage of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: We've all touched upon many of the salient points regarding this bill. I don't think those need to be touched on again.

1750

I think it's encouraging that we're all working together. It's very surprising, but it's also very encouraging. I like the fact that we're able to see beyond our partisan differences on this issue and recognize that this is an issue that does make sense. I particularly like the way my colleague framed it, that this bill does not have a poison pill. It's something that is crafted in such a way that it doesn't drive a wedge between any particular group or party. I think that's nice to see and positive to see.

I'd like to touch on a couple of points where I think we can improve the bill or just areas that we should turn our attention to.

One of the areas, again, that was brought up a couple of times but I think we need to focus on or that needs to be reinforced is that, if this act is passed—and it should be passed—and if there is not sufficient protection or enforcement, then employers may not support it or may not allow their employees to actually take the time off. We have seen time and time again that there are many labour regulations in place that are simply ignored by employers. If they are ignored and there's no repercussion, then, really, that regulation or that act or that law is rather meaningless.

Similarly, in this circumstance, I think we have to make sure there are some teeth to the act, to the bill. If an employee wishes to take advantage of this leave and take care of a family member who is injured or who is ill, there should be sufficient protections in place, and enforcement of those protections. That's something that's very key. I think we need to turn our mind to that. That may require some additional funding for labour enforcement issues, and I think we should think about that seriously.

The other area that's been touched on, and we need to touch on it just a bit more, is that while it's very encouraging that people can take time off from their work so they can take care of loved ones who are ill or who are not feeling well and have a serious illness, it still raises the question of those who are going to be financially in a very difficult position taking that time off. If the bill had some support system in place for those family members so that they could take the time off but also have some supplement in terms of income, that would be something that would be great to see. It would be very, very much a positive sign to the people of Ontario that, if they did have to take some time off and take care of their loved ones, there would be some financial support. Looking at that as an idea I think is very important.

The reason why I say that is that a number of these issues are tied together. So if you are working and the family caregiver act provides you an opportunity to take time off, leave, from your employment to care for someone at home, it's tied to ideas of home care and daycare. The reason why I say this is that this is one puzzle of a bigger picture.

If we had strong home care networks in place, if we had funding for home care, many of the issues that families face when it comes to caring for loved ones who are ill could be addressed with adequate funding for home care. If a family had affordable daycare, where they knew that their children could be taken care of in a healthy and safe environment that was affordable, then that would free their time up to take care of loved ones who were ill. With all these issues, there's an interplay between them. If we had a province-wide system that had effective home care that anyone who is injured or ill would have access to, ready home care with sufficient

hours, if we had a provincial daycare plan where folks knew that their children could be taken care of, this would free up resources so that people could care for their loved ones or, in some cases, rely on home care to do so.

If you want to frame this entire argument in an economic argument, it would be positive for a robust economy. Folks would be able to be productive, continue to work and have systems in place that would take care of their children, as well as their loved ones who are ill. It ties again into this idea of some proactive investment if, as a society, we start looking at some of the problems we face and recognize that investing a little bit up front would save a lot in the long run.

I have to talk a lot about my colleague's example of diabetes—the member from Essex. Diabetes is, at the end stage, one of the most costly diseases that we have that we can treat in our health care system. At the end stage of diabetes with kidney failure, dialysis is a very, very expensive procedure which we must do to take care of folks who are at that stage. But if you look at it, the cost of a dialysis machine and dialysis treatment versus the cost of making it easy to be healthy, if we made the healthy choice the easy choice, which is a catchphrase which is often used when we talk about health promotion, if the healthy choice was the easier choice and we made it so there was an incentive to get a gym membership or there were programs available where you could go out and be active, where an active lifestyle was encouraged, and we put some investment into that, we would save, in the long run, in the sense of the quite costly procedures involving dialysis. This is a way of putting some funding in place in the front end and saving in the long run or the back end.

When we talk about this issue of providing leave for families who take care of their loved ones who are injured or who are sick, yet if they weren't sick in the first place we wouldn't need to take that time off—all of these issues are very much interconnected. When we're talking about health and talking about the unfortunate circumstances that may arise, again, back to the member from Essex, people who are healthier to begin with can cope with illnesses and accidents much better. If you are healthier to begin with and you're faced with a traumatic injury, your chances for recovery are that much better.

If we look at this as a bigger picture, of course we want to give family members an opportunity to be able to take some time off of their work to take care of those who need that care. We can also look at it even deeper and, say, if we had a strategic initiative to promote health across the province, and we put some funding into that initiative and actually put some programs in place which made nutrition and education regarding health promotion a province-wide program, we could reduce the number of people that are injured in the first place, we could reduce

the number of people that would fall ill to preventable diseases and we could reduce the need for people to take time off of work to be able to care for those people. Again, it's a bigger picture, and I think we need to look at it with all its elements in place.

Again, many of the arguments—any issue that's raised nowadays we have to look at with the fiscal realities that we're faced with as a province. Of course everyone is aware that we're facing significant debt, and that is an issue that we need to address. For a robust economy and a province which is successful, it needs to take care of its finances, and that's of course a reality that we all accept, but there are strategies to address financial realities or debt which can support the members of the community, or there are strategies which cannot support them, which can leave the most vulnerable members in our society without any supports.

What I mean by that is, approaching a solution in a balanced way as opposed to slashing services and benefits and protections for people with a view to bringing down the deficit or bringing down the debt, we can look at it in a more balanced fashion and say, "If we made strategic investments in certain areas, those investments would result in savings in the long run; if we had a longer vision, we would create a more prosperous province."

This is an example of where we could have a broader vision. Looking at those who fall ill and looking at prevention and education and opportunities to prevent the illness in the first place would address many of the issues that people face, which is taking time off from work or not being able to work.

It's a known fact that we have an aging population, and in the coming years, we will see more and more folks—we'll have a larger percentage of our population which will be seniors. Naturally, as one gets older, there are health issues which increase as age increases, and it becomes more and more important for us to look for long-term solutions to address this as opposed to stopgap measures. Let's take this example that taking some time off to care for someone is not a sustainable solution. If someone is an aged senior who is facing a complicated series of health issues, their issues may not be solved by taking a week or a month or two months off. It may be a long-term disability, so we need some long-term solutions to be able to address that.

Again, some of those solutions are prevention and promotion—

Interjection.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Is it time? Okay.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I just wanted to draw your attention to the fact that it is approximately 6 of the clock and, as such, I am compelled to adjourn the House until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 19 March 2013

Mardi 19 mars 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 19 March 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 19 mars 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SKIN CANCER PREVENTION ACT (TANNING BEDS), 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PRÉVENTION DU CANCER DE LA PEAU (LITS DE BRONZAGE)

Ms. Matthews moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to regulate the selling and marketing of tanning services and ultraviolet light treatments /
Projet de loi 30, Loi visant à réglementer la vente et la commercialisation de services de bronzage et de traitements par rayonnement ultraviolet.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Matthews has moved second reading of Bill 30. Ms. Matthews.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

I rise in the Legislature today to speak to legislation introduced on March 7 that, if passed, would protect Ontario's young people from the harmful effects of artificial ultraviolet radiation by prohibiting the use of tanning beds for youth under 18 years old.

Before I go any further, I would like to recognize the efforts of the member from Nickel Belt in introducing private member's Bill 74, An Act to help prevent skin cancer, 2012, during the last legislative session. Further, I'd like to recognize the efforts of the former London–Fanshawe MPP Khalil Ramal, who introduced the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, 2008, and co-sponsored the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, 2010, with the member from Nickel Belt. I would also like to recognize the member for Scarborough–Guildwood for her past efforts to restrict tanning for youth in Ontario.

Speaker, prohibiting the use of indoor tanning for our youth is absolutely the right thing to do. Cancer is a terrible disease. We have all been touched by it—our friends, our families, ourselves. In any form, it can take an enormous toll on individuals and their families.

As I mentioned, I introduced this legislation two weeks ago. That day we heard from Susan Cox. Susan is living with melanoma; her story is powerful and her story

is heartbreaking. Susan spoke passionately about her experience with using indoor tanning beds and the impact on her. I would like to thank her again for sharing that story.

I would also like to recognize Kate Neale. Kate has worked very hard to bring this issue to the forefront. Many of you will remember Kate. She has been a real champion when it comes to cancer prevention. She came to Queen's Park to make sure we all knew about the dangers of youth tanning. She has educated MPPs on the importance of restricting access to tanning for young people.

I spoke to Kate on the day this legislation was introduced. Kate had this to say: "At 21 years old, I was diagnosed with skin cancer. I'm 22 now and living with the reality that I've wrecked my health because I used indoor tanning beds as a teen." Kate goes on to say, "The disease has scarred my body and continues to wreak havoc with my health.... I want to stop every 16-year-old from using indoor tanning beds, so I started volunteering with the Canadian Cancer Society in 2012 to take action on this issue." Kate goes on to say, "A year later, thanks to the efforts of many, this dream will hopefully become a reality when this legislation becomes law." I share Kate's hope for this legislation, Mr. Speaker, and I share Kate's hope and optimism for this Legislature.

I know that many Ontarians wake up every day prepared to fight their cancer, and we are fortunate we have so many highly educated, skilled, dedicated health care professionals in this province who come to work every day to help those patients with their fight. But I think it's incumbent upon us, as legislators, to do what we can do to prevent cancer in the first place. As legislators, we owe it to our loved ones to do everything we can to help reduce the risk of cancer, especially where our kids are involved.

I believe that our proposed legislation demonstrates that when it comes to protecting our youth from the harmful effects of tanning beds, we are on common ground. However, on March 4, prior to the introduction of this legislation, in speaking to the media after question period, concerns were raised by one opposition party member when they said that the Progressive Conservative Party does not believe in banning things. So I ask the party opposite to rethink that position. I ask them to think, how far does your opposition to bans extend? I raise this question because members of the same party have already demonstrated their support for the type of legislation we're debating today. In fact, on June 6 of last year, the member for Newmarket–Aurora brought for-

ward a petition from his constituents in support of the private member's bill introduced by the member from Nickel Belt, and he affixed his signature to that petition, signifying his support for that position.

I know the member for Prince Edward–Hastings represents Kate Neale, the young woman I spoke about earlier, and he has said, “There’s enough evidence out there now from the World Health Organization, the Canadian Cancer Society and many other organizations who say it’s not safe for teens to be tanning.”

0910

Mr. Speaker, there are some issues where party lines ought to disappear. For example, as a province we’ve agreed not to allow smoking in cars where children are present. We’ve decided that youth under 19 should not be able to purchase cigarettes or alcohol. As legislators, we’ve agreed among ourselves that there are activities that youth should not partake in to protect their health and well-being. I am confident that restricting access to youth indoor tanning is one of those issues where party lines should disappear. I know that every one of us on all sides of the House want to do our utmost to protect our children. So I call on members from all parties to find common ground and do what is right.

Although we have more work to do in our collective fight against cancer, as a government we have made good progress. For example, we’ve introduced integrated screening programs for cervical, breast and colorectal cancer so participants receive screening reminders. We’re supporting Cancer Care Ontario with the creation of an online tool that uses someone’s medical and family history to assess their personal cancer risks to help determine if someone could benefit from genetic testing, preventive supports or screening. We’re investing in regional cancer centres that provide radiation and chemotherapy; they’re making a tremendous difference in the lives of patients and their families.

We’ve enacted tough legislation to combat smoking. Our action plan for health care identifies the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy as a priority, with the goal to have the lowest smoking rates in Canada. We are determined to reach this goal and we will expand our efforts to do so. We’ve seen success: Smoking rates have decreased from 24.5% in the year 2000 to 19.4% in 2011, a significant decrease in smoking rates. To help Ontarians who want to quit smoking, we’ve expanded access to nicotine replacement therapies and we’ve provided counselling for smokers in family health teams, nurse-practitioner-led clinics, community health centres, aboriginal health access centres and in addiction service organizations. We’ve also helped Ontario Drug Benefit clients by providing funding for smoking cessation drugs through the Ontario Drug Benefit program. And we’ve increased support for Ontarians who smoke with hospital-based cessation initiatives in 15 locations and workplace-based cessation programs in collaboration with 19 public health units. We’ve also moved to protect youth from second-hand smoke and from exposure to cigarette power walls in stores. These measures are all part of our government’s focus on prevention.

Just as there is with smoking, there is clear and compelling evidence to indicate that we must take action on youth indoor tanning, and we must take that action now. Scientists have for some time expressed strong concerns about this issue and have urged governments to restrict young people’s access to tanning beds.

In fact, by passing this legislation, Ontario would join several other municipalities, provinces, states and countries that have already decided to take action on youth indoor tanning. In August of 2012, Oakville became the first municipality in Ontario to ban the use of indoor tanning beds for youth. Peel introduced a similar bylaw in September 2012, and in January 2013, the city of Belleville introduced similar restrictions. Quebec, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland have all introduced a ban, and Manitoba has introduced parental consent. In the US, California and Vermont have banned youth under 18 from using tanning beds, and more than 30 states currently restrict minors’ access to indoor tanning. Britain, Iceland, Finland, Portugal, Norway, Scotland, Spain, Sweden and France also have legislation restricting or prohibiting tanning bed use by youth.

Mr. Speaker, the dangers associated with exposure to artificial ultraviolet radiation at a young age have been well documented. Here’s what we know about cancer rates and youth tanning bed use: The World Health Organization puts tanning beds in the same highest-cancer-risk category as asbestos and smoking. In 2009, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, an expert committee that makes recommendations to the World Health Organization, reclassified UV-emitting tanning devices as carcinogenic to humans. It is known that tanning bed use increases the risk of malignant melanoma by 17%, and, more importantly, that risk increases by 75% if tanning bed use begins before the age of 35. Yet despite the warnings and despite the well-known risks, tanning bed use by youth is on the rise.

Between 2006 and 2012, tanning bed use more than doubled, from 7% to 16%, among grade 11 and 12 students. We know that the incidence of melanoma in Ontario has been rising in youth and young adults aged 15 to 34.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would ask the members to take their conversation outside or make it so it’s easier to hear.

Please continue.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you.

The incidence of melanoma in Ontario has been rising in youth and young adults aged 15 to 34, especially among females 25 to 34.

As I mentioned, the proposed legislation is similar to earlier legislation introduced in this House, and I would like to highlight some of the action this legislation would take.

First, it would establish a restriction on the sale of tanning services to youth under the age of 18, and it would require tanning bed operators to request identification from anyone who appears to be under 25 years of age.

It includes a provision for medical exemptions. We would consult with health care professionals to determine if a medical exemption is advisable and the form it would take.

The legislation would require that salon operators post signs noting the prohibition on tanning for those under 18, and it would also state on the sign the health risks of using tanning equipment for everyone, regardless of their age.

The legislation would prohibit the advertising or marketing of tanning services to youth under the age of 18, and it would permit the appointment of inspectors to support compliance. Operators would be required to inform their local public health unit of their business contact information to facilitate inspection.

Finally, the proposed legislation would provide for offences consistent with those in the Health Protection and Promotion Act. Specifically, operators would be subject to a maximum fine of \$5,000 for individuals and \$25,000 for corporations for every day or part of a day for which they fail to comply with the proposed legislation.

Speaker, I believe these measures are strict enough to generate compliance with the proposed legislation, but I would also like to assure members that we will work with stakeholders on implementation.

I know that our proposed legislation responds to the call of many organizations in the health community who have advocated for this restriction on youth indoor tanning. I would like to recognize the Canadian Cancer Society, the Ontario Medical Association, the Canadian Dermatology Association, the Melanoma Network of Canada and many, many others who have been advocates for taking action against indoor tanning use.

After we introduced this legislation two weeks ago, I was very happy to see that many in the health community support this legislation. I would like to take a moment to share what some of these very important groups think about the proposed legislation.

First, I'd like to thank the Canadian Cancer Society for their support. Joanne Di Nardo from the Canadian Cancer Society, who was with us when the legislation was introduced, said, "We applaud this decision aimed at saving lives and reducing the devastating impact of skin cancer." She has also said, "We hope that all members of provincial Parliament will act quickly to pass this legislation that has strong support from all parties and Ontarians." I could not agree more.

I would like to thank the Ontario Medical Association, who said that they "urge speedy passage of the bill to make this life-saving measure a reality."

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On the same day, my good friend Dr. Doug Weir, the president of the Ontario Medical Association, said that "the evidence is simply unequivocal that the use of tanning beds increases cancer risk—and the earlier in life people are exposed to UV rays, the more likely they will develop skin cancer."

The Melanoma Network of Canada, another strong advocate, was pleased to see the introduction of this bill. Annette Cyr, the chair of the Melanoma Network of Canada, said that, "We know that even limited exposure to tanning equipment in youth can greatly increase the risk of developing melanoma or other forms of skin cancer later in life," and that, "by introducing this bill, the Ontario government is signalling that it is committed to the fight against skin cancer"—and indeed we are, Speaker.

Finally, the Ontario Public Health Association said that it "welcomes the proposed legislation to ban tanning beds for youth under the age of 18." The Ontario Public Health Association also reminded us that "the rates of tanning bed use and melanoma incidence among youths have been rising in recent years and it is evident that education alone on this topic is not sufficient to curb the serious effects of using tanning beds."

Speaker, I know there are other groups and associations that are supportive of this proposed legislation, and once again I thank them for their advocacy in moving this issue forward.

I'm also pleased that this proposed legislation fulfills a commitment of Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care and fits with my ministry's overall goal of keeping Ontarians healthy, the first pillar of our action plan. We're working very hard to make Ontario the healthiest place in North America to grow up and grow old. With that goal in mind, our government is increasingly focused on prevention and keeping Ontarians healthy in the first place, so we're putting more of our efforts into promoting healthy habits and behaviours, supporting lifestyle improvements and better managing chronic conditions. In particular, we note that if we want to prevent illness in the future and achieve better outcomes in the future, we need to improve the health of our kids today.

Just as this proposed legislation takes action to prevent the incidence of skin cancer among our youth, we're also taking action to help our kids lead healthier lives overall. You'll know that last year we struck the Healthy Kids Panel, and last month I was very pleased to receive their report. I'd like to say it really is an excellent tool, an excellent report, that contains invaluable advice on how to help our kids lead healthier lives.

The key issue that the panel's recommendations addressed is childhood obesity. We know that childhood obesity is very complicated. There isn't just one cause, and there isn't just one solution. What we do know is that over the past 30 years, the prevalence of obesity and overweight children in Ontario has increased by 70%. We also know that as our children become adults, obesity later in life can lead to chronic diseases like diabetes, and there's a connection between obesity and cancer too.

So as a starting point, in response to the panel's recommendations, we're going to form an interministerial working group that will direct the government's actions on implementing many of the report's key recommendations. It will be co-chaired by myself and the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I can tell you that I'm very excited to co-chair this panel with my colleague Minister

Piruzza, and I'm looking forward to engaging our colleagues further on this issue. The legislation that we've introduced is one more way we're working to protect and promote the good health of our future, Ontario's young people.

I want to emphasize that restricting access to youth under 18 is not a "should do," it is a "must do." I want to reiterate that it is incumbent upon us as legislators to do everything we can do to prevent cancer. This proposed legislation is a great example of what we can do when we come together and find common ground on our shared priorities. I'm confident that this proposed legislation responds to the evidence before us, and I'm counting on our united effort to take action to prevent Ontario's youngest citizens from the risk of cancer. I'm asking all members to support this important piece of legislation.

I want to again say thank you to the organizations that have worked so hard to restrict youth access to tanning. I would like to say thank you to the member from Nickel Belt again for showing us what we ought to be doing and for coming together with common ground on this bill. I want to again acknowledge Khalil Ramal and the member from Scarborough-Guildwood, and finally I want to say thank you to those who work hard each and every day in this province to fight cancer. Thank you.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I rise in the House today to speak further to our proposed legislation that, if passed, would protect Ontario's young people from the harmful effects of exposure to ultraviolet radiation caused by tanning beds. I would like to acknowledge the presence of two representatives of the Canadian Cancer Society who have joined us here today: Joanne Di Nardo and Florentina Stancu-Soare. Thank you for being here.

This legislation is really a terrific example of what we can achieve when we work together and find common ground on our shared priorities. Our proposed legislation would prohibit the use of tanning beds by youth under 18. The contents of our proposed legislation are highly consistent with the private member's bill that the member from Nickel Belt introduced in 2012, and I want to echo the minister in thanking the member from Nickel Belt for the work that she's done on this issue. I know that this has been an important cause for her and I share her commitment to protecting our young people from the increased risk of developing skin cancer associated with the use of tanning beds. I would also like to thank a former colleague, the member from London-Fanshawe, MPP Khalil Ramal, for his hard work and passion on this subject. He introduced the Skin Cancer Prevention Act of 2008 and co-sponsored the Skin Cancer Prevention Act of 2010 with the member from Nickel Belt, and I was certainly happy to speak in support of both of those bills when they came before this House. Certainly, Khalil has been a strong advocate in the battle against skin cancer on behalf of all Ontarians, and especially our sons and daughters. Lastly, I would also like to thank the member from Scarborough-Guildwood for her work over the past few years to restrict tanning for young people in Ontario.

This is an area where I believe we have common ground with both of the opposition parties, and I believe

that all of us in this House recognize the serious challenge and potential harm posed by tanning beds for young people in this province. Speaker, there are simply too many Ontarians fighting cancer of all kinds. All of us know somebody—a colleague, a family member or a friend—who has courageously battled cancer, and all of us feel the responsibility to help those who are faced with this terrible disease; and all of us, as siblings or parents or friends but also as legislators, know the importance of preventing Ontarians from getting cancer in the first place. This is especially the case when our kids are involved. So we need to take action now.

Malignant skin cancers like melanoma can be aggressive and fatal. I'm not sure how many members of the House know that former Prime Minister Lester Pearson succumbed to malignant melanoma. I dug out one of my old dermatology texts because still, as a former medical officer of health, the need to educate is one of the things that I feel is a responsibility. So I want to tell you a little bit more about malignant melanoma. First of all, "most, but not all, invasive malignant melanomas arise from a pre-existing pigmented junctional nevus," that is, a mole. "The changes that herald the transformation from benign to malignant lesions are as follows: rapid change in size or colour, development of inflammation, bleeding, ulceration, and appearance of pigment around the lesion." The change from a benign to a malignant lesion produces so few warning systems that it is often unobserved. It goes on. It's actually very stirring stuff, I find, to understand exactly what this cancer is all about. And we should all be on the alert. We are talking here about prevention, but every member in this House should be very conscious of the fact that they should observe their skin for changes and report them to a physician immediately if they occur.

Now, at least here in Ontario, we can be confident about the type of cancer care we receive. Dr. Robert Bell, chair of the Cancer Quality Council of Ontario, and president and CEO of the University Health Network, has said that if you live in our province, you have one of the best chances of survival anywhere in the world. Thanks to our dedicated health professionals, if treated early, these cancers can often be beaten.

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But we all know it's far better to prevent our Ontarians from getting cancer in the first place. A focus on healthy living and disease prevention is an important part of our government's action plan for health care. The good news is, when it comes to skin cancer, we know one of the major causes: exposure to ultraviolet radiation.

Today, with this proposed legislation, we're taking action against an important source of ultraviolet radiation for many young Ontarians. The dangers of exposure to sources of artificial ultraviolet radiation like tanning beds have been well documented over the years, and there is strong and growing evidence associating the use of tanning beds with an increased risk of contracting skin cancers, including basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and, as already described, the most dangerous type of skin cancer, malignant melanoma. We also know that those dangers are greater for young people.

The World Health Organization has classified tanning beds in its highest-risk category for developing cancer, along with tobacco and asbestos. The International Agency for Research on Cancer, an expert committee that makes recommendations to the World Health Organization, has stated that there is a convincing causal relationship between tanning and skin cancer. In 2009, this agency reclassified ultraviolet-emitting tanning devices as carcinogenic to humans. It has been shown that people who use tanning beds have a 17% increased risk of developing melanoma—the particularly dangerous type of skin cancer—compared to people who don't use tanning beds. More importantly, there is evidence of increased risk for youth. In fact, the risk of melanoma increases by 75% when people use tanning beds before the age of 35.

What's more, skin cancer treatment is costly for the province's health care system. With increased use, those costs will only become higher over time. Very simply, there is significant and increasing evidence that the use of tanning beds increases a person's risk of developing skin cancer. More perniciously, the risk is increased even more for young people using tanning beds.

Public health units across the province have been doing their very best to educate people, particularly children, on the risk of tanning beds. I was pleased to see that the York region health services department website has a campaign to educate the public. It's called "Don't Be Caught Dead in a Tanning Bed," and it outlines a number of tanning bed fast facts; in essence, that tanning lights can give off five times as much ultraviolet radiation as the sun, so that not only can it cause skin cancer but sunburns, wrinkles—very important for young ladies—and eye damage.

Markham Stouffville Hospital has, on its website, promoted the same campaign. However, education is obviously a very important step, but we feel strongly that we need to take education a step further and introduce this important legislation.

So, overall, with the educational efforts that have been made, more and more Ontarians recognize the dangers of youth tanning. In spite of this, substantially more young people are, in fact, using tanning beds today than just a few years ago. We know that tanning bed use by young people between the ages of 12 and 17 rose from 5% to 8% between 2006 and 2012 in Ontario. In the same period, the proportion of grade 11 and grade 12 students using tanning beds more than doubled, from 7% to 16%. Meanwhile, the incidence of melanoma in Ontario has been rising in youth and young adults between the ages of 15 and 34.

We all agree that the best way to fight cancer is not to get it in the first place. As I said earlier, our government has made its commitment to cancer prevention clear, and it is a key part of our action plan for health care. As parents, we have a responsibility to protect our sons and daughters. As legislators, we have a responsibility to protect the young people of this province, and with the proposed legislation before us today, we have an opportunity

to do just that. Speaker, the imperative to act is clear and the time to act is now.

Now let me outline in greater detail the elements of the proposed legislation.

The proposed legislation would establish a ban on the sale of tanning services to youth under the age of 18. There is a provision for medical exemptions, and we will consult with health care professionals to determine if a medical exemption is advisable and what form it would take. As many members in the House I'm sure are aware, an example where UV radiation can be helpful is for some conditions such as psoriasis.

In order to ensure young people are not using tanning services, the legislation would require that salon operators ask anyone appearing to be less than 25 years of age for identification to prove their age. This would be consistent with how the LCBO, Beer Stores and convenience stores ask young customers to provide acceptable forms of identification before they are allowed to purchase alcohol or tobacco products.

The proposed legislation would also require salon operators to post signs noting the prohibition on tanning under the age of 18. Because we recognize that tanning beds pose risks for all who use them, it is important that Ontarians are properly informed before making choices that might affect their health. Signage would also have to outline the health risks of using tanning equipment for everyone, no matter what age.

As the sale of tanning services for young people under the age of 18 would be prohibited, it would also be inappropriate to market those services to young Ontarians. As such, this legislation, if passed, would prohibit the marketing or advertising of tanning services to young people under the age of 18.

Of course, these requirements would need to be enforced, so the proposed legislation would permit the minister to appoint public health inspectors in order to support compliance and respond to complaints about compliance with the legislation. Operators would be required to inform their local public health unit of their business contact information to facilitate inspection. This written notice would include the tanning establishment's location and would be submitted to the local medical officer of health.

This will be extremely helpful for public health units. They have been struggling with the fact that tanning salons open up on just about every corner. They literally, in the course of their duties, note the location and go in to inspection once they are, in fact, aware of the location. So this written notice will facilitate the inspection activities of health units.

Finally, we recognize the need for strong measures to ensure compliance. That's why the proposed legislation would provide for offences, with operators subject to a maximum fine of \$5,000 for individuals and \$25,000 for corporations for every day or part of a day for which they fail to comply with the proposed legislation. The proposed fines are similar to those in the Health Protection and Promotion Act, which is the most relevant statute for

point of comparison, given that addressing tanning is similar to addressing other kinds of health hazards that may affect people.

However, the proposed fines are different from those for selling tobacco and liquor to minors. In the case of tobacco, individuals selling tobacco to persons under age 19 are subject to penalties of up to \$4,000 for a first offence to \$100,000 where the person has committed three or more offences. For corporations, it's up to \$10,000 for a first offence, to up to \$150,000 where the person has committed three or more offences. In terms of alcohol, the Liquor Licence Act states that the maximum fine amounts for selling alcohol to a person under age 19 are \$500,000 for corporations and \$200,000 for individuals, imprisonment for up to one year or both.

The fines we are proposing, \$5,000 for individuals and \$25,000 for corporations, are higher than those provided in the member from Nickel Belt's most recent private member's bill, which were \$2,000 for every day or part of a day not in compliance. I believe that the measures in our proposed legislation are strict enough to generate compliance. However, as the minister said before me, we are committed to working with stakeholders on implementation.

Today, there are about 1,300 tanning facilities operating in Ontario. They are located in a variety of diverse locations. In addition to salons, tanning beds may be found, for example, in gyms and in condominium buildings. The Joint Canadian Tanning Association, or JCTA, estimates that commercial indoor tanning is a \$500-million business in Canada. Overall, the JCTA estimates that about 10% to 12% of the population uses indoor tanning equipment. We know that a growing number of those people are young people.

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The good news is that with this legislation we can significantly lower the number of young people using tanning beds. When you consider the dangers of artificial ultraviolet light tanning, which I've already outlined, the need for action is clear. This is an area where there's a great deal of consensus about the necessity of focused action. I believe this proposed legislation represents important common ground for all the members in this House today.

What's very compelling is that there's widespread support among the public and among stakeholders that youth tanning must be banned. For instance, an Ipsos Reid survey conducted in June 2011 found that 83% of Ontarians support a ban on the use of tanning beds by youth under 18, and there are many organizations in the health community that have spoken out loudly and clearly on the need for a ban on indoor tanning for young people.

Organizations that have advocated for a ban on youth indoor tanning include the Canadian Cancer Society, the Ontario Medical Association, Ontario's medical officers of health and public health units, the Canadian Dermatology Association and the Melanoma Network of Canada. The minister, before me, has spoken about the strong

support many of these organizations and others have displayed for this proposed legislation since she introduced it less than two weeks ago. I'm grateful for the support of these organizations and others like them, and they've shown that this is an important piece of proposed legislation. Even more importantly, I'm grateful to them and to many other groups and associations for their continued advocacy on this issue. I think it's important to recognize the thousands of Ontarians who volunteer every day for organizations like those in the fight against cancer. The proposed legislation we are speaking about today is in part the result of their action and advocacy.

A ban on youth indoor tanning has been an important goal for many cancer survivors, loved ones of those who have cancer or who have had it in the past, and others who have been touched by the tragedy of skin cancer.

Clearly, advocates and scientists have expressed strong concerns about this issue, and many have urged governments around the world to restrict young people's access to tanning beds.

Internationally, the World Health Organization and the International Agency for Research on Cancer have both been clear that tanning beds can cause skin cancer.

I have spoken already about the member for Nickel Belt's long advocacy on this issue.

As the minister mentioned moments ago, the member for Prince Edward-Hastings has recognized that "There's enough evidence out there now from the World Health Organization, the Canadian Cancer Society, and many other organizations who say it's not safe for teens to be tanning."

The member for Newmarket-Aurora also brought forward a petition from his constituents last year supporting a restriction on youth indoor tanning, and affixed his signature to it. I'm so glad that he's quoted in the Newmarket Era—I'm sure, Madam Speaker, you read that, as most residents of northern York region do, religiously every week. Mr. Klees is quoted on March 14 of this year with regard to this legislation.

"When a choice turns into a matter of personal harm, the government needs to take action'....

"Although he respects young people, Mr. Klees admitted he made some decisions in his youth that he wouldn't make now." I found that particularly intriguing, Madam Speaker.

"Creating rules for indoor tanning is no different than regulations on cigarettes, gambling and alcohol, he said.

"It is the responsible thing for the government to do."

On the other hand, I was somewhat dismayed recently to hear the member for Whitby-Oshawa say to the media that the official opposition doesn't believe in banning things. I'm hopeful she will reconsider her remarks because I have to wonder if members opposite don't believe in banning young people under 19 from purchasing cigarettes or purchasing and consuming alcohol. And I wonder if the official opposition opposes our ban on smoking in indoor public places like restaurants and bars. And I

wonder if members of the party opposite oppose our ban on smoking in cars where children are present.

Ontarians agree that people, especially young people, should be restricted from certain activities that are harmful to their health. I'm confident that restricting access to youth indoor tanning is one of those issues where party lines disappear.

Many jurisdictions have already taken action on youth indoor tanning: municipalities, provinces, states and countries. Oakville became the first municipality in Ontario to ban the use of tanning beds for youth in August 2012. Only a month later, in September 2012, Peel introduced a similar bylaw. In January 2013, the city of Belleville introduced similar restrictions. So we now have a patchwork across Ontario, and this legislation will provide a level playing field.

Six Canadian provinces—Quebec, Manitoba, BC, PEI, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland—have either introduced or implemented legislation restricting tanning bed use by young people, ranging from requirements for parental consent to an outright ban. In the United States, California and Vermont have banned youth under 18 from using tanning beds. In total, more than 30 states currently restrict a minor's access to indoor tanning, either by requiring parental consent or setting an age limit.

A number of other countries also have legislation on their books restricting or prohibiting tanning bed use by youth, including the United Kingdom, Iceland, Finland, Portugal, Norway, Scotland, Spain, Sweden and France.

In our own country, at the federal level, Health Canada recently proposed regulations to update health warning signs on tanning equipment sold across Canada. Those proposed warning signs will speak to the increased risk of cancer from tanning bed use and will advise that tanning bed use is not recommended for anyone under 18 years of age.

Ontario's proposed signage goes further. It will specify that people under 18 are prohibited from tanning and warn all users of the potential health impacts of tanning bed use. The specifics of the requirements for signage will be prescribed in regulation, and the ministry will consult with other jurisdictions and with Health Canada in their development.

There's no question that Ontario is on the right track with our proposed ban on youth tanning, and it's important to note that in jurisdictions where a youth ban is in place, there has been no evidence to suggest that it has had any serious detrimental effect on tanning businesses.

Speaker, our proposal responds to growing evidence and gathering momentum across our province, our country and around the world that a ban on indoor tanning services for young people is key to reducing the risk of our children contracting skin cancer. I believe our proposed legislation presents a balanced approach—very typical of our government—toward reducing the health risks for young people from tanning, minimizing burdens on the industry, and managing the level of investment required by government for enforcement.

Let me assure the members that we will work with our stakeholders to implement this new legislation, including

developing guidelines on advertising and marketing, which will be prescribed by regulation.

This proposed legislation is consistent with the broader changes we're making in Ontario's health care system. Just over a year ago, the Minister of Health released Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care, an ambitious plan designed to address head-on the twin challenges we are facing: fiscal and demographic. It called for a fundamental change in how we deliver health care in Ontario in order to maintain the sustainability of our universal public health care system for generations to come. It called for the kind of change we could only bring about by working together: government and opposition, legislators and health professionals, policy-makers and front-line workers. We need all Ontarians to work together to bring about a shift in the way we understand health care and how it's delivered. We have made tremendous progress in just over a year, and I believe this piece of proposed legislation represents exactly that kind of change and exactly that kind of co-operation between advocates, scientists, health care workers and members of all parties in this House.

Speaker, Ontarians increasingly recognize the importance of living healthy lives. We recognize that government has a vital role to play in this. Our health care system should be helping people stay healthy, not just treating them when they're injured or ill. That's why a key part of our action plan for health care was our government's commitment to keep Ontario healthy by focusing on wellness, prevention and health promotion. We are working to make Ontario the healthiest place in North America to grow up and grow old.

This proposed legislation aligns closely with this key pillar of our health care system's transformation. It is another step that complements what we've already done to improve our kids' health. We know that as our children become adults, obesity can lead to chronic diseases like diabetes later in life, and there's a connection between obesity and cancer, too.

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Over the past 30 years, the prevalence of obesity and overweight children in our province has increased by 70%. This is a major challenge, and our action plan set an aggressive goal to reduce childhood obesity by 20% over five years. We have already implemented several programs to address obesity, including EatRight Ontario and the Healthy Schools initiative, but we know that effectively tackling obesity goes beyond healthy eating and exercise. It's a complex challenge with many causes and many solutions.

That's why last year we struck the Healthy Kids Panel, bringing together experts in the field to provide us with proven strategies for reducing childhood obesity. Earlier this month, the minister received their recommendations on how to meet our ambitious goal. This is an important report that reflects the best available evidence and includes invaluable guidance on improving the health of our children. In response, we are going to form an inter-ministerial working group that will direct the govern-

ment's action on implementing many of the report's key recommendations, co-chaired by the Minister of Health and the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

We have also worked hard to protect our kids and prevent cancer by toughening tobacco laws, banning smoking in public places and encouraging more Ontarians to quit smoking as part of Smoke-Free Ontario. As part of our action plan, we are determined to have the lowest smoking rates in Canada.

We are building on these strong measures by working to prevent young people from getting addicted, making it easier for smokers to get support and reducing the demand for tobacco products. We banned the retail display of tobacco products on so-called "power walls," and in 2009 we extended the smoking ban to include motor vehicles when children under 16 are present. In July 2010, we banned the sale or distribution of flavoured cigarillos, to protect youth and young adults. We have recently listed smoking cessation drugs on the Ontario drug benefit formulary and expanded access to nicotine replacement therapies for those undergoing addiction treatment. We are committed to increasing fines on those who sell tobacco to children.

We are also investing in a school-based and youth-led strategy to prevent kids from taking up smoking, a Smokers' Helpline, cessation counselling in health care settings, and free nicotine replacement therapy through family health teams and public health units.

Speaker, our government is also supporting communities to plan and deliver integrated programs that improve the health of Ontarians through our Healthy Communities Fund. Additionally, about 130,000 children who have never been able to have a filling, or even have their teeth cleaned, will have access to a dental professional through the additional \$45 million we've invested in Healthy Smiles Ontario. We're also providing \$4.25 million to the Asthma Plan of Action, an integrated plan led by the Ontario Lung Association to improve health outcomes for Ontarians with asthma.

Finally, our province's public health program focuses on the health and well-being of the whole population through promotion and protection of health and the prevention of disease. Public health units and medical officers of health work to protect the health of Ontarians by controlling infectious diseases through regulatory inspections and enforcement and by preventing or reducing exposure to environmental hazards. They work with community partners to promote healthy living and prevent disease and injury by closely monitoring outbreaks, screening for cancer, immunizing to control infectious disease and conducting research on injury prevention. These are just some of the health protection and promotion initiatives our government has taken. This legislation, of course, forms an important part of that program.

Some of our most important commitments to preventing disease are part of our ongoing fight against cancer. It is imperative that Ontarians get screened for cancer; we know that cancer screening saves lives. That

is why we are working hard to make sure all Ontarians are screened, so that cancer can be detected early. To better improve cancer screening rates, we are expanding comprehensive screening programs for cervical, breast and colorectal cancers, so that we notify and remind participants when they are due for their next screening. We've also created the Time to Screen tool, to provide Ontarians with more information on when to start screening based on their age and gender. We are also working on an online personalized cancer risk profile. This tool will use patients' medical and family history to measure their risk of cancer. It will then match people to screening programs and prevention supports, including genetic testing for people at high risk.

We expanded the Ontario Breast Screening Program in 2011 to include high-risk women beginning at age 30, resulting in 90,000 more screens over three years. Our government expanded the provincial breast cancer screening program by funding an additional 332,000 screens and adding 53 new breast screening sites across Ontario. This brings the total number of screening sites in the province to 153. I think this is a huge step forward in accessing health care as close to home as possible.

We launched Canada's first province-wide colorectal cancer screening program to combat the second deadliest form of cancer in the country. We've invested \$193.5 million over five years to implement this colorectal screening program.

We introduced a free vaccine to protect young women against the human papillomavirus or HPV, which is the major cause of cervical cancer. This vaccine is now provided to 77,000 female grade 8 students every year, and that saves families up to \$405 per child.

We've also further expanded cancer detection by funding the prostate-specific antigen, or PSA, test. This is helping to fight prostate cancer, the most common cancer among Canadian men.

We have made tremendous progress, but there's still more to do. Quite simply, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, too many Ontarians are faced with cancer, too many loved ones who have to fight this terrible disease. The proposed legislation before us represents one more important step that we can take to protect our children and prevent Ontarians from developing skin cancer. I believe that this proposed legislation responds to the evidence, advances our health promotion goals and addresses a serious health issue in a fiscally responsible manner. The proposed legislation is aligned with the broader changes we're making in Ontario's health care system through our action plan, the kind of fundamental changes we need to make in order to protect health care for future generations. The legislation, if passed, would be part of our shift toward health promotion and prevention and part of our commitment to keep Ontario healthy.

I believe this proposed legislation shows common ground between all members of this House, and with the support of all members the act could be effective as soon as October 2013 and no later than January 2014. This would allow time to develop supporting documents like

protocols and guidelines for public health units who will enforce the act, training for public health inspectors and the necessary regulations to support the legislation.

I'm asking for all-member support so that this proposed legislation could be implemented as early as possible, and I want to close by once again thanking the many people and organizations who have worked tirelessly to protect our kids by making clear the risks of indoor tanning bed use and advocating for its restriction for Ontario's youth. I want to thank them for the work they do and the dedication they show every single day.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I have enjoyed listening to the leadoff speeches by both the Minister of Health and the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, who has extensive medical knowledge. I thought that it was great that she did have that public service announcement with respect to melanoma and the need to do regular checkups to make sure that you don't have any problem areas.

But I would also like to acknowledge and thank the member for Nickel Belt for really starting this conversation. I think this is something whose time has come. There is very compelling evidence to suggest that exposure to tanning and ultraviolet rays does in fact cause skin cancer, and especially with respect to tanning beds, where there's evidence that there's five times more radiation than one can get from regular sun-skin contact. This is something we need to consider very carefully.

I have consulted with the Canadian Cancer Society, with the Joint Canadian Tanning Association and the OMA. There are numerous groups who have been speaking to this. I know that my colleague the member from Prince Edward–Hastings has a young lady, Ms. Kate Neale, who has been a very outspoken advocate for the banning of skin tanning beds for persons under 18.

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There is certainly a precedent in Ontario for the state to take a role in situations where young people are concerned, with the inherent *parens patriae* power that we see being exercised by the state. The children's aid societies derive their authority under that inherent jurisdiction. So, while it has been said that we don't believe in banning things, there's certainly a reason in some cases to do that where young people are concerned. Adults can of course make their own decisions, but when it's young people that we're considering, we need to make sure that they're kept safe. We look forward to further discussion on this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too listened to the Minister of Health and her parliamentary assistant. I have waited a long time to hear the Minister of Health and to hear the government speak in favour of the Skin Cancer Prevention Act.

We have focused a lot of the discussion so far on one part of the bill, which is the part that everybody talks about; that is, that it will ban young people from using

tanning beds. But the bill has other parts that are also important for all of us. You've heard the member for Markham go into quite a bit of detail as to what skin cancer means. Not only do young people get skin cancer but we, too, are at risk.

The bill bans young people from using tanning beds, but it also has other parts to it. One will be that when you go and use a tanning bed, there will be clear signage telling you that tanning beds cause cancer, similar to what you see on cigarette packages, but this message still needs to be told.

Right now in Ontario, we have no idea where those beds are. They are often in health clubs, at the back of a locker room some place, and people use them at will. Now, if you have a tanning bed that you use in a commercial way, you will have to register them with the health units. The health unit will be able to go into your premises and make sure that you have signage, that you don't let young people use them, that you have checked IDs etc., making it safer.

What the bill also will do is that it will continue the hard work of the Canadian Cancer Society—I thank them for being with us today—of educating people who still don't know. It's well worth supporting.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm thrilled to be here to speak on behalf of the bill from the minister and my colleague from Oak Ridges–Markham.

As a registered nurse, but more importantly as a Canadian, this issue is about protecting young people. As the member for Scarborough–Agincourt, I know about this issue first-hand, more importantly as a registered nurse, because the proposed legislation is comprehensive in terms of the education awareness but also the responsibility of the owner, because it's clearly laid out in the explanatory note about the responsibility of those who are selling a service called tanning. Because, at the end of the day, we know the owners have responsibility in having this product being provided on their premises.

The other piece about the legislation is the enforcement aspect of it. Both the member from Oak Ridges–Markham and I have spent over 20 years dealing with tobacco legislation. We know that any time we have legislation in this province we must have an enforcement feature. In the bill, it talks about inspection, what the role of the inspectors is and how they enter the premises. That is critically important.

The other piece about the legislation is the advertisement piece, because we know young people—the same strategy that we currently use for the tobacco awareness campaign is also being considered for this proposed legislation. It's the right thing to do.

I'm confident hearing the colleagues from the opposition party are in support of this legislation. Let's move it from this House to a committee for further debate to enhance this bill, if necessary, but we need to bring this back sooner than later because, at the end of the day, we are here to protect every young Ontarian in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a couple of minutes of comments on Bill 30. I guess it's very appropriate that I speak, given my hairline.

About a year ago, I came back from a holiday south and found that I had a spot on my face. Ultimately, it was skin cancer and I had it cut off. I know it's hard to believe that this face could have all these scars on it. Normally, people thought it was from hockey, but it was from cancer. It was a very sobering thing for me because, as the member for Whitby—Oshawa said, some of us aren't big in terms of banning, but it really changed my outlook on the whole situation.

The other thing that changed my outlook was an event that I attended in my riding after I had had my cancer cut out. It was the Relay for Life at St. Mary Catholic high school. I was so overwhelmed at the number of young people who approached me, as their member of provincial Parliament, who knew that I had had skin cancer, and these young men and women were pledging to me, as a legislator, that I hear from them—even though they didn't have a vote, even though they weren't of age to cast a ballot for members, they wanted me to know how committed they were to this piece of legislation. That really was a game changer for me, not just because I had cancer, but because I listened to what they had to say.

I also learned at a very young age from my late father, who had psoriasis. He self-tanned quite often in the home, but he always said—and this is decades ago—that he knew the perils of that.

So I support the legislation, and I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oak Ridges—Markham has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Helena Jaczek: I'm certainly very pleased and heartened to hear the remarks of the members who have commented on second reading of this bill.

To the member for Whitby—Oshawa, I know that she likes to research things very, very thoroughly, and she obviously has done so in this case. Although I don't think any of us want to ban things for the sake of banning, in this particular case the health of our children is absolutely paramount, and the educational efforts to date have not, unfortunately, been sufficient to reduce the number of young people using tanning beds.

To the member for Nickel Belt, again, a good colleague and someone who has so long advocated for many measures related to public health, I think you've pointed out very importantly that skin cancers can affect any one of us, particularly those, in fact, of fairer skin and those with a tendency to burn with the sun or, in this case, ultraviolet radiation. We all need to be extremely cognizant of changes in our skin.

To the member for Scarborough—Agincourt, who, as many of you know, worked with me at the York region health department for many years: Soo knows all there is to know about tobacco legislation. When things were

getting really tough in York region—and we had some recalcitrant groups related to tobacco legislation, in particular some of the Legion halls—who better to enter in there but public health nurse Soo Wong? She achieved miraculous results in our community.

The member for Leeds—Grenville has had his little brush with mortality. I urge him in fact to ensure that his face and head are both covered as he goes out into the sun, and I know he will never, ever use a tanning bed.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Madam Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. O'Toole has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: No further business, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. This House stands recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1009 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: The mother of Dan Powers—who is our senior legislative adviser and press secretary to the leader of the official opposition—Dr. Anne Marie Liberatore and his brother Christian Powers are here today for question period.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to introduce the president-elect of OSSTF, Paul Elliott, who is here in the west lobby; and Paul Kossta, the staff person legislative observer. Thank you for coming.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to introduce the family of page captain John Gobin. They're in the west gallery: Winston and Leila Gobin, the parents; and Rajpattie Ramnaran, the grandmother. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Lisa M. Thompson: Today, I'd like to welcome page Ellen Jansen's grandmother Nancy Millson, in the public gallery. She's here to watch her granddaughter in action today.

Mrs. Cindy Forster: I'd like to welcome the Wendling family from the Welland riding: Kevin, Rosanne, Kyara, Ariel, Mia and Denise. They're joining us today to see Kyara start her first week as a legislative page. Welcome.

Hon. Michael Chan: I would like to welcome the following guests from my ministry's sport and recreation unit: Russell Zavitz, Janet Rudd, Caterina Rewega, Imshan Poolar, Anushe Rabbani, Parmik Chahal, Faye Blackwood, Scott Cooper, Sarah Love, Barbara Lyon-Stewart and Peter Evans.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's a pleasure for me to announce the presence of the parents of our page Owen

Clute. The parents are Fiona Smith, Tom Clute and Neve Clute. Welcome.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like the opportunity to welcome the grade 5 students from St. Brendan Catholic School from the riding of Pickering-Scarborough East to the Legislature today. They're from the Scarborough part of my riding and they're touring the Legislature and listening to us in question period. I believe they are just coming in now.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I also have parents of pages who are here. Yesterday his mother was here; today his dad, Marc Bédard, is here to support his son Nicolas, who is one of our pages. And the mother of Magalie Malette, Marie-Josée Bergeron, is also here with us today.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce Larry Scott, who was our candidate in the last provincial election for the riding of Oakville.

They're soon to join us in the west gallery—it's my pleasure to introduce Matt Hiraishi, manager of Ontario government relations for the Insurance Bureau of Canada; and Robert Demille of Demille State Farm Insurance in Oakville, whose father was my former campaign manager. They're taking part in the annual insurance day at the park. Please show them all the courtesy the House deserves.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville, Emily Kostiuik's mother, Julie Rosenberg, who is in the gallery visiting her daughter. Welcome and thank you.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If I could now have the pages assemble, I would like to introduce our new pages to the House.

I'm going to ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of young pages serving in the second session of the 40th Parliament: Fae Alexander from Thunder Bay-Superior North; Brittany Ally from York Centre; Nicolas Bédard from Nickel Belt; Owen Clute from Trinity-Spadina; Leah Dehn from Kitchener-Conestoga; John Gobin from Scarborough-Rouge River; Eric Guild from Timiskaming-Cochrane; Stone Haines from Windsor-Tecumseh; Andrew Hodgins from Durham; Nadim Iddon from Parkdale-High Park; Ellen Jansen from Huron-Bruce; Ali Javeed from Scarborough-Guildwood; Arveen Kang from Bramalea-Gore-Malton; Emily Kostiuik from Mississauga East-Cooksville; Magalie Malette from Sudbury; Dasha Metropolitansky from Oakville; Andrew Sheehan from Niagara West-Glanbrook; Jacob Van Boekel from Oxford; Kyara Wendling from Welland; and Helen Zheng from Davenport.

Welcome. Now get to work.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think the member has interpreted my comment very liberally.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That wasn't my message, to get carried away. That was my message to say, let's relax.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question this morning is for the Minister of Finance. Our party's concern is high as a result of widely reported comments you made that strongly suggest a major solution to your budget deficit woes could be to raise taxes. You bobbed and you weaved, Minister, but when you were asked point-blank if you would raise taxes, your answer was, "I am taking every consideration as to what we need to encourage investment..." Where I come from, Minister, we take that as a qualified yes.

When pressed, you said, "Well, there's been obviously some speculation that's been written and I'm not going to speculate."

Well, no one wants you to speculate, Minister. Just tell me and tell the people of Ontario how you are going to sustain ballooning public sector pensions. Is it your intention to raise taxes in Ontario, yes or no?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. I also appreciate the engagement that you're finally giving us in regard to this budget. I've reached out to you so many times. I do appreciate that we're having this discussion, and we are having consultations around the province.

Let's be clear: What have we done? We've cut taxes. We've cut taxes for personal. We've cut taxes for corporate. Ontario is one of the most competitive tax jurisdictions anywhere in the world. We're attracting investment. We're attracting investment that's staying in Ontario. As a result of these initiatives, we've now been able to garner 400,000 net new jobs since the recession.

The fundamentals in Ontario are strong. We're poised to do so much more. I look forward to working with all sides of the House in making this a very good budget for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I can't say you're not learning.

It seems dodge ball is not confined to phys-ed courts in gymnasiums. You and your Premier have evaded every public question pertaining to cutting costs, public sector pension payments, public sector wages, program spending—no apparent curtailment anywhere. Meanwhile, you claim you're on track to eliminate the deficit by 2017, without any figures to support that claim.

Minister, your own economist, Don Drummond, has said that gold-plated public sector pensions are not sustainable. You have provided no evidence of any concrete plan to control spending. With your public sector pensions in place, Ontario is staring down the barrel of a fiscal gun. You will not commit to holding taxes at pres-

ent levels. So tell Ontario and tell me this: What specific spending do you intend to reduce, and by how much, or what specific taxes are you raising?

1040

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the only dodge that we have on our side is David Dodge, and we look forward to his advice, to his contribution, alongside others like Don Drummond. We've taken their advice, and we've started to institute some of those very measures to support a very strong economic power here in Ontario.

We have a sensitive recovery, no doubt. That's why we need to be diligent, but we can't take extreme measures. We can't go off doing slash-and-burn policies; that's only going to hurt our recovery. But we also have to be very careful about our spending, so that we ensure—that we ensure—that the economy continues to thrive, that we are on target to balance our books by 2017-18. We're taking every measure necessary to ensure that.

Again, I say to you, we have reduced taxes, we are one of the most competitive jurisdictions and we're looking forward to going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: A couple of weeks ago, when we were talking about the throne speech, I quoted my grade 9 history teacher who said, "You talk a lot, but you don't say much." Minister, you cannot keep evading the issue—you can't keep evading the issue. Balancing budgets can only result from increasing revenues, reducing costs or a combination of the two. You and I both know that.

With an estimated \$100 billion in unfunded liability, you're looking at north of \$4 billion per year in pension costs. I could stand here and I could ask you line by line, item by item, what you're going to do, but in Premier Wynne's spirit of openness and transparency, just tell us clearly and directly which programs are being cut or which taxes are being raised.

How are you going to cover the shortfall that you have created to pay for these incredibly rich public sector pensions?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite would know fully well, because I shared with you my House book; I shared with you my transition binder. I've given you my answers already. I've told you some of the initiatives that were going to help you with questions, no less. But I'll tell you this, because I do want to work co-operatively with you; I am anxious to do so: When it comes to pensions, we have now negotiated with four unions and joint pension plans. That's going to save and avoid costs of up to \$1.5 billion over the next three years. These initiatives are very strong. They are taking the right steps.

What we want, Mr. Speaker, are results. We want positive results. It's how we get there that matters. Some of the suggestions that you're putting forward would create havoc in the system. We want to work with our

stakeholders and our partners, we want those zero/zero wages, we want to ensure that our pensions are under control, and, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Premier, we finally heard yesterday from your energy minister that the \$40-million figure you stuck to for months on the Oakville gas plant cancellation "could be wrong." First, you blamed the OPA, the Ontario Power Authority, for the missing documents, and then, yesterday, your energy minister blamed the OPA for this \$40-million figure, yet the OPA says it was the government who ran the show.

You keep deflecting responsibility, exclaiming things like, "It wasn't me," and "The dog ate my homework." Basically, Premier, who, indeed, is responsible for this? If it's not \$40 million, just how much is the actual cancellation of the Oakville plant?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question of the member opposite, and I know the Minister of Energy is going to want to comment in the supplementary.

I'm very glad that the committee is now looking at all of these questions. That's why we wanted to broaden the mandate of the committee, Mr. Speaker. I was very clear that we wanted that committee to be able to look at all aspects, and that's what's happening. If I had thought that all the answers were in the public realm, then I wouldn't have suggested that the Auditor General look at both gas plants. I made that suggestion because I think there are questions. The Minister of Energy has confirmed that, and so we will allow the Auditor General to do his work. We will get the answers to those questions, and I hope that the member opposite is paying close attention to what's going on in the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To the Premier: I actually agree with the Premier that not all the information is in the public realm—I will agree with you on that. We're still waiting for many more document dumps. But, Premier, you could have been honest and up front with Ontarians in the past, but you have refused. You could have made this \$40-million admission weeks ago.

On February 21, the same day as the third document dump, the CEO of the OPA refused to confirm the combined amount of \$230 million for the Oakville and Mississauga cancellations. Four days later in this House, the energy minister said, "We stand by that number." Premier, why have you refused to admit the Oakville figure was wrong when the head of the Ontario Power Authority gave you a pretty strong hint four weeks ago that it indeed was an incorrect number?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: It is indeed very helpful to have the justice committee having hearings on this particular

issue at this time. Just this morning, the mayor of Oakville said:

"Our citizens organized their own effort to ask the province to rethink the proposed power plant....

"They won promises from all parties to stop the proposed ... plant."

He also said, with respect to the cost—and this is very, very important: "Anyone who wishes to criticize the cost of cancelling it would do everybody a favour if they would explain how they would have done it differently."

They promised to relocate the plants. They have not calculated the cost. They're picking figures out of the air. They're not prepared to wait for the witnesses—all the witnesses—to present their evidence or to wait for the Auditor General to give his opinion. Be patient.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, here we are, four weeks into your session, and we're still waiting for you to be forthright with Ontarians. We know cabinet was briefed over a year ago on Project Vapour, the code word for your Oakville cancellation. We know you know the real cost. Premier, you don't need a committee to tell Ontarians the truth; you just need to stand up and let it out. Why do you need the Auditor General to tell you what your own deal cost? Has this government lost so much control of Ontario's finances and the treasury that it now admits it doesn't know the cost of its own deal?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, he's raising two or three different points. He's talking about disclosure; he's talking about transparency, or a lack of it. We took the initiative to have the Ontario Power Authority senior management come to Queen's Park and answer questions in an unfettered way. They stated absolutely clearly that they made the decision on their own on which documents to release or were relevant—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I tried humour at the beginning. I have to go back to the other, and that includes comments while the answer is being given from the same side.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: They also stated that there was no political interference in terms of which documents would be released, or anything concerning the release of the documents.

We have been open. We've been transparent. The Premier has been unbelievably open and transparent with the opposition and with the public, expanding the purview of this committee and being prepared to come forward. She's willing to go to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Last year, the Minister of Health promised that executives at Ornge wouldn't be receiving bonus pay this

year. Can the Premier tell us whatever happened to that plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question; I think it's an important one. Ornge did make the decision a year ago—it was a prudent decision, a decision I supported—not to offer bonuses to its employees. There would be no performance pay. However, that decision was appealed. A group of employees at Ornge did take that decision to the HRSDC. HRSDC did rule that they were entitled to those bonuses, that performance pay. HRSDC ruled that so that Ornge—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: They made the decision, the right decision, to—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As soon as I ask you to be quiet, as soon as there's a break, you add. So the member from Renfrew, come to order.

Finish, Minister, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: In order to avoid the high cost of litigation, they did decide to offer bonuses to their employees with a very clear understanding that this is one time. It brings their salary up to what it was last year. It is not higher than last year's, and they have a plan going forward.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The fact that executives at a disgraced public company will be getting big bonuses is just another bit of bitter news for patients who want to see health care dollars spent helping people get well, not padding the pockets of already-generous public salaries.

Once again, the government promised to crack down on spending at the top, and their promises have been proven as empty as the government's promise to cap CEO salaries. When will the Premier take some real action to show patients that they're the priority in our health care system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I have to object to the characterization that front-line staff at Ornge are not worthy of appropriate compensation. I think the people at Ornge have been through a very difficult year. I supported the decision of the Ornge board not to grant bonuses, but I don't think we need to drag down the people who give their lives every day to save the lives of others, Speaker.

The Ornge board made a responsible decision. The first decision was no bonuses. That was appealed; they lost. Going forward, they have a very clear framework so that any pay for performance will be based on very clear criteria.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People are waiting for results from this government, Speaker, like a five-day home care guarantee.

Sheri, a Toronto resident—not my colleague from Parkdale–High Park, but another Sheri from Toronto—wrote to us out of frustration: “The state of care for our elderly is so sad. My grandmother served her country in the Second World War, she sacrificed so much for herself to make a life for future generations, and this is how we repay her and others from her generation.”

Irma, from the great community of Don Valley West, writes this: “Based on my experience, I would say that the government was wasting far too much money on management and not spending wisely on ensuring that their clients were getting good care.”

We’ve put forward a simple plan. Is the Premier ready to crack down on bonuses and public sector CEO salaries and make smart investments in a five-day home care guarantee?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I thought we were talking about air ambulance. Now I guess we’re talking about home care, but I’m happy to answer the question.

I completely agree with the member opposite. We need to invest more in home care. We are making important investments in adding home care. We have common ground with the third party that investing in home care is a very high priority.

I met last week with health ministers from across the country. All of us are dealing with the same issues regarding our aging population. We agree that we need to invest more in home care so people can stay home as long as they are able.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. Last year, the government insisted that the cost of cancelling the private power deal for the gas plant in Oakville was \$40 million. Will the Premier stand by that figure today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said to a question previously from the opposition, we were very clear that we were going to open up all of the information, to provide all of the information. That’s why we asked that the mandate of the justice committee be expanded, Mr. Speaker. That’s why the questions that are being asked are being asked: because we’ve allowed for that expansion of mandate.

That’s why I asked that the Auditor General look at both the Oakville and the Mississauga situations: because I think there are questions, and we don’t have all of the answers that we need. The only way to get the answers is to have people who are experts, like the Auditor General, look at the numbers and determine what the answers are. That’s why we’ve asked them to do it, and I await the work in his report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, once again, the people see their government make a clear commitment about costs, only to hear later the same government backtrack with a brand new number. Ontario households and businesses are now paying some of the highest electricity rates in the entire country. Does the Premier think it’s acceptable that they can’t get a straight or consistent answer from their government on the true cost of this gas plant debacle?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I made it clear when I came into this office that I thought that there needed to be an openness, that we needed to make sure that every piece of information was available. I have said that it pains me that we haven’t been able to have the information all at once, that it wasn’t a simpler process, that we weren’t able to provide all the information.

The reality is every party in this House said that they were going to cancel those gas plants. That was the position of every single party. The testimony this morning at the justice committee by the mayor of Oakville was that he had all-party support for the cancellation of the Oakville plant.

The reality is that there are questions, Mr. Speaker, that need to be answered. We are providing the conditions so that those questions can be answered, including the Auditor General looking at the books and giving us an answer on the numbers. We await that response and look forward to his report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats were the only party, during the election campaign, who said it would be irresponsible to tear up contracts sight unseen. That’s what we said.

At the justice committee this morning, the government’s witness made it clear that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You kind of got ahead of me, but I was going to stand up and ask for some quiet. Order.

Leader?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: At the justice committee this morning, the government’s witness made it clear that the Liberals’ private power system is a mess. Instead of open, accountable electricity planning that hears public concerns, we have a government handing out hundreds of millions of dollars to private power providers to cover the cost of cancelling contracts that never should have been signed in the first place.

Is the Premier ready to admit that this is a system that is simply not working for the people of this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, to hear the leader of the opposition speak this morning, it sounds as though her commitment to the mayor of Oakville when she—Mayor Burton said this morning, “Our citizens organized their own effort to ask the province to rethink the proposed power plant.... They won promises from all

parties to stop the proposed power plant.” That’s all parties, Mr. Speaker. All three parties in this House said that they would cancel those gas plants.

Now the leader of the opposition is saying that she wouldn’t have ripped up contracts—she wasn’t sure what she would have done, Mr. Speaker. The fact is, she gave a promise; she said that that’s what she was going to do. We acted on that promise. We delivered that. We are acting on the promise that we made during the election campaign.

She can’t have it both ways. She can’t have the corner on righteousness on this if she said she was going to cancel it, and now she’s saying she wasn’t going to.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. We don’t have to wait for the Auditor General’s report to find out that which we already know. The cost of the Oakville power plant cancellation is more than \$40 million, contrary to that which you’ve previously indicated. Perhaps a little late in the game was the Minister of Energy, who admitted yesterday, when referring to the government documents, “They could be wrong.”

We appreciate the minister finally reading the documents and testimony yesterday from Bruce Sharp, but had he done that earlier, he would know that the government numbers were wrong. Instead, this government has focused on throwing the OPA under the bus at every turn rather than admitting any fault.

Premier, I’d like you to answer this question: Do you agree with the Minister of Energy’s comments yesterday, and if so, can you tell us what the real cost of the cancellation of the Oakville—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: To the member who asked the question: They could be right. “They could be wrong” means they could be right. Okay? That’s the truth.

The reality is that we have a process under way, Mr. Speaker, which is the justice committee, which is taking evidence under oath.

We have a witness who came forward today who said quite clearly—and I want to repeat: under oath, the mayor of Oakville—“We enjoyed expressions of support from all parties, including Mr. Tabuns, and we appreciated the support of all parties. We were particularly encouraged by the strong statements that MPP Ted Chudleigh made.”

In addition to that, the mayor said—and I agree with the mayor—under oath: “Anyone who wishes to criticize the cost of cancelling it would do everybody a favour if they would explain how they would have done it differently.”

So I ask the member who asked the question, how would you have done it differently? Because you were going to cancel the project yourself.

1100

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Simply shouting down an answer is not going to cut it today. Starting now, I’ll start mentioning individuals’ ridings.

Supplementary.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don’t need another comment on that either, Minister.

Mr. Rob Leone: In testimony today, Oakville Mayor Rob Burton stated in committee that he didn’t believe TransCanada was entitled to any payout, because no building permit was issued and no municipal approvals were given, yet \$638 million of public money is gone because of the decisions of your government. You take no responsibility; all you do is blame somebody else.

They blame Bruce Sharp. They blame Chris Bentley. They blame the OPA. They’re even blaming computers, Mr. Speaker. There is literally nothing—human, electronic device, government agency or otherwise—that this government won’t use to blame and refuse to accept responsibility.

I want the Premier to answer this question, Mr. Speaker: Was the Minister of Energy correct in saying that the cost is higher than \$40 million for cancellation of the Oakville power plant?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: There was an election campaign in 2011. All parties have agreed that they were going to relocate the Mississauga gas plant. We were fortunate enough to be elected; we did what we promised to do and we did what the other two parties promised to do. It then came to a question of calculating the costs, and in calculating the costs, the Ontario Power Authority—who did the negotiation, had all the documentation—calculated the cost. They made those figures available to us. We released those figures to the public. We now have a committee—which has a broader mandate, thanks to the Premier—looking into it. The member who asked the question is a member of that committee. Let’s wait until the committee is finished and they decide what the outcome is. We’ll deal with the outcome after all the evidence is in, including the evidence from the Auditor General, whose report we requested.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Premier: Today, Rob Burton, mayor of Oakville, testified that before the agreement with TransCanada was signed, he met with the former Premier to say that Oakville didn’t want the plant, that there were risks that Oakville simply didn’t want; but the government went ahead with it anyway. It made a major mistake. In fact, when we asked if the plant should have simply been stopped before it started, the mayor said, “I would have appreciated that as a taxpayer”—before it started, before you signed a contract. Will the Premier acknowledge that her government

started the problem that has incurred the cost of \$638 million?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Speaker—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville is warned. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order. The member from Essex, come to order. One warning, and many more to go if I have to.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The question of the location of gas power plants is one that is before a committee of the Legislature right now, the justice committee, but what's interesting is that all three parties are represented on that committee and all three parties opposed both the Oakville and the Mississauga plants.

As has been pointed out this morning, when Mayor Rob Burton was asked by one of our members, "Would you like to elaborate particularly on the support Mr. Tabuns lent you in the drive to get the Oakville power plant cancelled?" the mayor had this to say: "We enjoyed expressions of support from all parties, including Mr. Tabuns." Once again, this was a promise that was made by all three parties, and it was kept by our government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Back to the Premier: The Oakville gas plant didn't fall from the sky. The Liberal government signed the contract to put it there, over the staunch objections of the town of Oakville and its mayor. And now the government won't say how much that cancellation is going to cost. Will the Premier acknowledge that the Liberal government created this mess?

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member raises the issue of cost. Perhaps we should remind him that the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature, is right now looking into the costs of both the Mississauga and the Oakville plants, with the urging and encouragement of this government. He's also very aware, as he's a member of the committee, that the justice committee is looking into it.

But what I find passing strange is that neither the New Democratic Party nor the Progressive Conservative Party has ever thought to furnish their costings and their policy analysis when they opposed both these plants going into the election, when they put forward the costings of what they would do if they formed government.

Mr. Speaker, isn't it time for all parties to come forward and provide that type of information? We have been forthcoming on this side of the House, and we look for the same spirit on the other side of the House.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, on Saturday, March 23, from 8:30

p.m. to 9:30 p.m., people across Ontario and around the world will celebrate Earth Hour. Earth Hour is a global event where we turn off our lights for an hour to show our commitment to energy conservation and protecting the planet. People in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham take part in Earth Hour every year, turning off their lights and showing support.

Energy conservation is important, both for a healthy environment and a strong energy system—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham will come to order.

Carry on.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: PowerStream, which is one of the electrical distribution companies for homes and businesses in my riding, encourages their customers to turn off their lights during Earth Hour each year.

Speaker, through you, could the minister inform the House of the steps we are taking to conserve energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you to the member for Oak Ridges–Markham. Speaker, Earth Hour is an important event for raising awareness around climate change—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Huron–Bruce, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm proud to say that our government has worked hard to create a culture of conservation. In the past six years alone, we have saved over 1,900 megawatts, the equivalent of taking 600,000 homes off the grid. Our long-term energy plan makes a commitment to reduce peak demand by 7,100 megawatts by 2030.

We're also working closely with local utilities to deliver meaningful programs to consumers, including the heating and cooling incentive, the fridge and freezer pickup, and requiring increased efficiency for the construction of new large buildings and residential homes. Our government is doing a lot for conservation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Hand in hand with conserving our energy and shifting demand to off-peak hours is having an accessible program that allows Ontarians to conserve energy easily and effectively. Part of doing this is having the proper infrastructure in place so we can accurately read results of when Ontarians consume energy at different times of the day.

Jurisdictions all over the world are turning to a smarter energy grid to allow users to get the energy they need when they need it.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is our government doing to create a smart energy system that is friendly to conservation programs and fosters new innovative ideas?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member is correct: Implementing a smart energy grid is crucial as we build a stronger and more reliable energy system in Ontario. That's why our government has introduced smart meters

and time-of-use pricing across the province to help conservation efforts.

Mr. Speaker, these initiatives are about choice. Smart meters give Ontario families greater control over their energy consumption, with more accurate information. They give Ontarians the choice to shift their energy consumption to different times of the day. This avoids the need for new generation and transmission investments, saving consumers money in the long run.

As we shift our energy usage to off-peak hours, we also minimize the impact on the environment and, in the long run, save the ratepayer money.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Yesterday you were asked about the \$40-million cost estimate for cancelling the Oakville gas plant after it was openly challenged by an expert witness in committee. That witness testimony estimated the true cost to be 15 times higher. You dismissed that testimony as based on assumptions. You were then asked by the media whether you would stand behind your figure of \$50 million, and you said it “could be wrong.”

That’s a stunning reversal after months of insisting that the total cost to the taxpayer of cancelling the Oakville plant was just \$40 million. What changed your mind? Was it the testimony at the committee, or did you just receive an advance draft of the Auditor General’s report?

1110

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: That’s a stunning question because the question was just asked by his colleague and I answered the question. So I’ll answer it again. We fulfilled the commitment to—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We fulfilled the commitment to cancel and relocate the gas plant, as the opposition had promised. We were fortunate to win re-election and had the opportunity to do so. The Ontario Power Authority did all the negotiation; they did the calculation of costs. They provided the cost to us. They provided documentary information to us, which we released to the public. They were the keepers of the documents; they provided those documents to us. We now have a committee that’s looking into it with an expanded mandate, thanks to the Premier. We will wait for all the evidence to come in. I did not have any advance copy of the Auditor General’s report, and I—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. When I stand, everyone sits. Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, after months of your government continuing to insist that \$40 million was the absolute, total price for cancelling those plants, the only reason that you would come up with new information

tomorrow is that you know something that you have not told this House. You have new information; you are aware that that cost is higher. The Auditor General is doing his investigation, and you’ve asked the public to be patient for that report. But yesterday, you were already trying to discredit him by saying that the Auditor General’s figure—and he hasn’t even released it. You said, “I think the figure will be a figure on which there will be a lot of opinion, whatever it is.”

Minister, we’re not philosophers; people have a right to absolute answers. You know today that it is more than \$40 million. It’s about time you fessed up—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. A tightrope walk to saying something unparliamentary, but I would like to remind all members—I’m going to springboard from the member’s comments—that we do not impugn or use certain phraseology in this place that indicates that someone is not telling the truth. I’ll leave it at that.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member who asked the question is absolutely dead wrong. If he wants to bring a Bible over here, I’ll swear on it. I have not seen the Auditor General’s report draft or have any information whatsoever.

What I have said consistently is that the Ontario Power Authority did the negotiation; they had all the documents. I said here, every single time the question of cost has come up, that we relied on the information that was provided to us by the Ontario Power Authority. We now have a committee that’s looking into it. The committee will have a purview to examine everything and come up with its own conclusions. I, as minister, have been privy only to the information and numbers that have been provided to me by the Ontario Power Authority and nobody else. Take that, put it in your pipe and smoke it.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. There are a couple of members that are desperately on the edge.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, I know—and remain so.

The member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Premier, the OLG is handing out up to \$750,000 in public money to private companies to bid on contracts so the Donald Trumps of the world can make even more money. Yet this same government is obliterating the horse racing industry without any consultation or plan for the future. Why is this government investing money into private companies that are already

making profits and leaving the horse racing industry to collapse completely?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to speak to the horse racing part of that question because I really need the member opposite to know how hard we're working to make the horse racing industry sustainable in the province.

There were many, many concerns about the model that was in place. We put a panel in place. My predecessor, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, put in place a panel—Elmer Buchanan, John Snobelen, John Wilkinson—and the panel found “it would be a mistake to reinstate SARP.... The program has provided far more money than was needed to stabilize the industry—its original purpose—and has done so without compelling the industry to invest in a better consumer experience.”

So we are working with racetracks. We are trying to make sure that racetracks have the ability to survive.

In the member's own backyard, Mr. Speaker, the Lakeshore group is working to try to put together a business model so that they can bring back racing to the Windsor area. So I look forward to working with them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The Premier knows full well time is running out. Premier, offering the Donald Trumps of the world public money so that they can make more money on the backs of Ontarians is not a good strategy. Up to 20,000 to 30,000 full-time jobs in the horse industry are at stake in rural Ontario.

My question to you, Premier, is simple, and I would desperately appreciate an answer. Will the Liberal government continue to choose to give subsidies to private corporations who want a piece of the casino industry over coming up with a real plan to save the horse racing industry in rural Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: So, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear as to what he's asking. We have before us a modernization of the OLG, and the lottery and gaming component of it. In order for us to get the best value for money for our taxpayers, we want proponents to make their bids and their submissions. We now have before us a very complex and large bid—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Essex has asked the question, and I'm hoping he will listen to the answer.

Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm trying to respond to your “why.” We're doing this so that we can get more proponents because we only have one major bidder. We need to have more so we can have a competitive proposal so that we can do the best we can for our community.

How we did it? We sought legal advice. We went through Infrastructure Ontario. This is standard practice in other regions so that we can get the best value for Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Charles Sousa: And why? Because we want to generate even more money for hospitals and health care and our social services to help all Ontarians. That's what this process is about—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —and only those—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Just a reminder: When I say “thank you,” that's the end; when I say “answer,” you've only got a wrap-up sentence to go.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's true of all people.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to liken this to a boxing game. There are people who give cheap shots at the end of a boxing round. That means when the bell goes, the guy gives an extra punch—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Somebody's already doing it while I'm speaking—or a low blow. So when I do get the quiet, it's not the moment in which I want you to ramp it back up again.

New question.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Last fall, our government made it clear that our priority is to secure agreements with our public sector partners, and we've worked really hard to achieve that goal. Since that time, the Ministry of Government Services has successfully negotiated collective agreements with two of its largest unions, OPSEU and AMAPCEO.

Given the need for fiscal restraint and the importance of eliminating our deficit by 2017-18, could the minister please advise this House on how much these savings have achieved for the province of Ontario?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for asking this question. Negotiations are never easy, but when both parties work together to achieve the common objective, we can achieve greater results. I really want to thank the leadership of the AMAPCEO and OPSEU organizations for working diligently with us to make sure that we reach fair and reasonable agreements.

1120

So let me just tell you, Mr. Speaker, that AMAPCEO is a 10,000-member organization, and we reached an agreement with them which they ratified last October, in 2012. The savings that we realized in the first year were \$24.6 million. In the second year, we will get about \$30.4 million.

The OPSEU organization is about 35,000 members and the largest public sector organization. We will

achieve about \$34.1 million in 2013 and \$37.4 million in 2014. We are very proud of these negotiations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: That's very encouraging to hear from the very hard-working minister. I know those savings will go a long way to balancing the budget by 2017-18.

Mr. Speaker, I'd again pose my question through you to the Minister of Government Services. I know that our government is committed to finding fair agreements from our public sector partners for all Ontarians. For agreements to be fair, the contracts we negotiate must respect both employees and taxpayers, and they must balance cost restraints with the public services that Ontario families rely on. We made it clear that returning Ontario back to balanced budgets is a priority for our government and that we plan to achieve this by working with our partners to do what's best for the people of Ontario.

Can the Minister of Government Services please tell us what other benefits Ontarians will receive as a result of these new contracts?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the hard-working member. Mr. Speaker, one thing has become very clear to us: that if both parties work together and they can sit at the table and negotiate agreements, we can actually achieve great agreements.

In these two agreements, we will save about \$126.4 million for the public and the government. That will help us to actually balance our budget by 2017-18.

We are very proud of the agreements and the relationship we have with our working partners. We look forward to working with them in the future as well.

DRIVE CLEAN

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, I know you're well aware that vehicle emissions here in Ontario have dramatically declined over the last decade. But this trend isn't unique in Ontario. British Columbia has also seen major reductions, largely as a result of new technology and cleaner fuels. Speaker, that's why the Liberal government in BC is phasing out its emission testing program: because they know it's no longer necessary. But what did you do? You rushed to introduce a new computerized test that's less reliable and more prone to error. Now every day, countless vehicles fail this new test not because of emissions-related problems but because of a computer error.

Minister, can you explain the difference between the situation in Ontario and in BC?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, the hardest job in this House has to be environment critic for the Conservative Party, because you have to take the anti-environment stand on every occasion. Unlike some of his predecessors—Dr. Harry Parrott would be an example, and Susan Fish, who took a pro-environment stand—he doesn't.

Let me tell you what the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment says about Drive Clean.

"Our doctors are extremely concerned about air pollution. In Ontario, nearly 10,000 people die prematurely each year because of smog. Programs like Drive Clean—which reduce smog components and poisons such as carbon monoxide—are very important to public health. Our doctors believe that, far from being eliminated, these programs should be strengthened." That's from Gideon Forman, executive director, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Minister, I flatly disagree: I think the folks who have the hardest job in this House are you 53 on that side trying to defend this scandal-plagued government.

Minister, I'm hoping you can explain how your temporary changes to the new Drive Clean test make any sense. First you tell Ontarians they must pay \$35 to get a new test. Then, if their car fails because the computer isn't ready, you tell them to drive around town and up and down the highway for a day. Also, they can go back to the shop and pay to take another test. And to top it all off, you've added another step for Ontarians buying a vehicle, who may have to get up to three tests at a cost of nearly \$90, before making a purchase.

Minister, in all seriousness, how can Ontarians view this unnecessary serum as anything more than a government cash grab?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I keep in close contact with the author of this program, Conservative Minister Norm Sterling. I want to compliment Norm on establishing this program, which is excellent for the province of Ontario. I know he got bounced out of the party by you folks there, but he still established a good program.

Drive Clean reduces unhealthy emissions from cars by 36%. It reduces automobile pollution in Ontario by more than one third. To put it in a bigger context, Drive Clean cuts smog pollutants by nearly 35,000 tonnes a year.

I can tell you that the Environmental Commissioner said—I just happen to have here before me his exact words from his report—"The Drive Clean program has undergone a number of independent program reviews that concluded significant reductions in smog-causing pollutants were being achieved, but that further reductions could result from program improvements," including implementation of the new regime. That's Gord Miller.

TUITION

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Yesterday, I visited students at the University of Windsor. They told me how difficult it is for them to afford rising tuition fees and how financial stress is hurting their studies.

Ontario has the highest tuition fees in Canada. Why is this government considering increasing fees yet again by as much as 5%?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're working very closely with students across Ontario and our post-secondary institu-

tions to ensure that we arrive at a balanced approach when it comes to the potential tuition fee increases down the road and the framework that we're working very hard on, as the member is aware.

But I want to ask the member: Her policy right now suggests that we take our 30%-off tuition grant, which is providing 200,000 students across this province and low- and middle-income families with assistance, and spread it to the richer families across the province. That would be helping rich families at the expense of poor families. Is that still her approach? Does she still want to spread that across to the richer families at the expense of the low- and middle-income families? I'd like to hear that in her response.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister my question again, so here we are. Students at the University of Windsor pay the highest tuition fees in the country, and graduate fees are 75% higher than UBC's. Many are graduating with unsustainable debt.

In a region where the youth unemployment rate is over 20%, many students are quite simply losing hope. Will the minister get tuition fees under control, or will he compound the struggles of students by raising tuition fees once again?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, we're going to work with students across this province in our post-secondary institutions to make sure we have a tuition framework that's fair and balanced and that balances the need for affordability with the need for quality. But what we won't do is promise things that the NDP are promising that are absolutely impractical. The member opposite in Windsor yesterday said that they were going to waive all debts for students across this province. That's a \$10-billion promise. Where are you going to find the money to pay for that? Corporate tax cuts, maybe?

Mr. Speaker, they want to use corporate loopholes to pay for health care and home care. They want to use corporate loopholes to pay for \$40 billion in public transit investment. Now you're identifying another \$10 billion that you want to spend for students. Tell us where you're going to get the money—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. It is frustrating that municipalities in Ontario often have a difficult time collecting payment for fines issued under the Provincial Offences Act. This problem began in 2002, when the government at the time chose to download the enforcement of the Provincial Offences Act onto cities and towns across the province. There are now millions of dollars in uncollected funds and outstanding payments. In my hometown of Ottawa, where this is a significant problem, we're happy to hear that the Minister of Transportation is taking steps to

address this issue, delivering on a promise made in the 2012 budget.

1130

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Transportation: Could you please tell the House what actions are being taken to help the municipalities collect unpaid fines and what it will mean for Ontario drivers, families and municipalities?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The Premier has asked that each of us spend more time listening to municipalities and less time talking at them. One of the things that we've heard loud and clear is that the party opposite downloaded roads, collections and fines, and that was unbearable. Minister Chiarelli, before me, took real leadership in addressing this and proposing that we introduce legislation to assist municipalities with that.

I also want to thank the Minister of Labour, who introduced a private member's bill that is actually the foundation of this legislation. This will actually prohibit people from being able to renew their plates unless they pay their fines.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I am glad to hear that the minister is taking action on this issue. The legislation he is introducing will help our cities and towns, and make our roads a safer place. But with all new legislation, it is important to know how it would impact Ontarians. My constituents in Ottawa are happy that we are addressing this problem; they want to know more about our solutions.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Transportation: Could he please elaborate on what this legislation will mean to all Ontarians and what my constituents in Ottawa—Orléans should know about it?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member from Ottawa—Orléans for his leadership as well. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has worked very closely with the government in designing this legislation. What it will mean is that when you go to renew your licence plates, if you have not paid your fines, you will not get plates. As a matter of fact, you won't even be able to switch plates, because this applies to multiple plates. It also means for communities like Kenora or Ottawa—border communities—when people go through red lights, we will now be able to collect out-of-province fines; that's another big, important thing that Mayor Watson in Ottawa, particularly, has advocated for. This is a very, very positive initiative.

But more important than anything else, this is about saving lives. Any of us who have been in city councils, who have sat there when someone has been run over by a speeding car or an elderly person crossing an intersection gets hit—people don't seem to understand the responsibility—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

CASINOS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Premier. Premier, if you really want fairness for all

municipalities—including places like Windsor, London, Niagara Falls and Ottawa—then why has the OLG not corrected its earlier statement that the city of Toronto could expect to receive \$50 million to \$100 million in casino hosting fees? Just so we're clear, Premier, in order to reach a—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

The Minister of the Environment made a comment that I would not consider parliamentary. Would you please withdraw?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Premier, just so we're clear, in order to reach a \$50-million hosting fee, a casino would need to generate at least \$7.5 billion in profits, which is more gaming revenue than the entire Las Vegas strip generated in 2012 alone. Will the Premier direct the OLG to correct their earlier statement and will she finally come clean as to the exact amount the city of Toronto is going to get?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. It's important to note that the formula is the same right across the province, regardless of the municipality. The Premier has made that clear. That is certainly the consistent message. That is what is being said and that is what is being done.

What is also being done is that a huge amount of money is being proposed to be invested in the city of Toronto. The complex that's being provided is not just a casino. It's also a convention centre. It's also transportation. It's also the hotel. It's a huge resort that's being proposed, so the size and scope of the proponent is what's at question. The amount of generation of revenue will be a positive effect for the city of Toronto should the city of Toronto decide they want to pursue it, and that's their decision first.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier: That answer is why people in communities affected by the McGuinty-Wynne OLG modernization have lost faith in you. They don't trust you to look after them. First you refuse to give people a referendum prior to a casino coming to their community; now you won't force OLG to reveal what secret sweetheart deal they're discussing behind closed doors.

At this point, there's only one way to ensure OLG isn't stacking the deck, and that's by making details of these deals—and I mean all of them—public. Will you say no to secret deals, Premier, and commit today to make all the details of these agreements public?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be clear: Right now, municipalities are being asked to consider the idea of having a casino, to see if they're receptive to it, after which they have the opportunity to review the proposals, review the proponents, review the siting, and then again make their decision, should they want it or not.

The issue before us in Toronto is much more complex and much grander than is being proposed in other parts of

the province. The purpose, of course, is to generate even more revenue to service health care, to service our education, to service social programs, and do it in such a way that would be cognizant of the social benefits for the province.

I say to the member across the way: We're doing everything we can to be open and transparent in the process, to ensure that we get many proponents investing in the process.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Jonah Schein: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Speaker, New Democrats have been working with cycling advocates across Ontario to get our communities moving again. This winter, over 1,000 activists signed a petition asking the minister to clarify the Highway Traffic Act to allow contraflow bike lanes on Ontario's roads.

As a response to community pressure, ministry staff have met with the city of Toronto and arrived at an understanding that will allow Toronto to create opposite-direction bike lanes on one-way streets. But the rest of the province is still waiting, Speaker.

When will the minister clarify the Highway Traffic Act so that municipalities across Ontario can move ahead with their bike plans and install contraflow bicycle lanes?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member from Davenport for his very thoughtful and timely question. I also appreciate his advocacy on this file and have enjoyed meeting with him to work with him on this.

There's a cycling strategy right now that is at the mid-point in development. It is my intention to take this for consultation, because as a cyclist myself, I know there's a lot of debate within the cycling community about separated at-grade cycling lanes and how we deal with these, and the priorities of how we establish those on our highways. It is the intention of the government to move quite quickly on this in the coming months, but we want to make sure we get it right.

I want to thank him for the question and hope he will continue to play a leadership role in this conversation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Back to the Minister of Transportation: For years, New Democrats have been pushing for this government to actually update the provincial bike strategy. We're pleased that this is moving forward.

We believe that we need a plan with real targets and real timelines to increase ridership in this province, and an updated Highway Traffic Act that will protect all road users.

Speaker, the current act is ambiguous and has left city planners in Ontario without clear direction. While cities like Ottawa have installed contraflow bike lanes and, after years of delay, Toronto is now moving ahead with one, cities like Kitchener and other cities are still waiting for the go-ahead.

Even without the release of the new plan, will the Minister of Transportation please clarify the Highway

Traffic Act and allow all municipalities to plan safe contraflow bike lanes for Ontarian cyclists?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The answer to my friend from Davenport is, yes, I will review it. I will look at the powers. I've only been in this job a few weeks, so I'm still learning the ropes here, quite frankly. But I will look and see what we can do, short of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank him for his initiative. We have no car in my family. My partner cycles to his job as a nurse every day and works in an operating room where he sees the results of people who are victims of accidents, so this is not lost on me. It's not lost on the Premier. She has encouraged me as well to get a proper policy in place, and I think this is a great place in which our party and your party can co-operate. I think we share some values and some ideas here, and we need to move quickly.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier, in a response to the member from Kitchener—Conestoga, the Minister of the Environment alluded to a former member of this chamber in a way that spoke to internal party issues. I do believe, Mr. Speaker, that in a previous session here, you stood and ruled that those kinds of childish interjections and games would not be tolerated—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I listen carefully to all of the questions and make my deliberations as quickly as possible in hearing that. I do not agree with the member's assertions.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do want to make a comment, though, and the comment is, lately I've been hearing individuals make comment about individuals' abilities in this place. I find that offensive, even in jest. I would hope that all members would be respectful of each other's abilities and their capabilities of performing their duties here and in their ridings. So I'm going to be a little tougher on those individuals who make comments about someone's abilities in this House—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the member not to make any other comments while I'm speaking.

I take this very seriously, and in jest I told the members that were making some kind of jest that I still didn't like the comments.

I'm going to challenge all of us to rise above and ensure that we do not make negative comments about anyone's abilities in this place. You may challenge policies; you may challenge the capacity of whether or not you're getting an answer or what kind of question you're getting. But I would offer all of us the challenge to rise above that kind of comment. There is no—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will entertain the member from Timmins—James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: Earlier today in question period, the Minister of Finance alluded to the fact that he was sharing his briefing book for question period with the opposition. I would ask him to table that document.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Actually, I kind of figured that one out. It's actually not a point of order, but it is not beyond any minister to submit any documents.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I don't get guests very often, but things have changed in this session. I have Mr. Marc Bédard—who is the father of Nicolas Bédard, one of our pages—here in the gallery taking in the proceedings. Bienvenue à Queen's Park, M. Bédard.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. The pages and I had lunch today, and we were really having fun.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INSURANCE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize the representatives here today from the Insurance Bureau of Canada.

The business of insurance has a rich history dating back hundreds of years. At a time when the Christopher Columbuses of the world were discovering new continents, the financiers of the expeditions needed a way to protect themselves against the risk of major losses. The insurance industry developed to service this need. Insurance, therefore, was intrinsic to expanding trade, growing economies and developing our modern society.

Today, the insurance industry directly and indirectly employs 63,000 people in Ontario. It contributes \$4.1 billion to our province's GDP, and it provides peace of mind to homeowners, drivers and businesses. Ensuring a vibrant insurance industry is necessary for a well-functioning economy, but also to ensure that Ontarians are fully protected against unanticipated losses.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Cathy and Maurice Chauvin of Stoney Point, like thousands of other Ontario families, are doing the very best that they can to support their developmentally disabled child, Joe, and his siblings while maintaining full-time jobs. Joe has very complex needs. He has cerebral palsy, he's legally blind, he suffers seizures and he's confined to a wheelchair.

Despite these challenges, Joe's family has provided him with an enriched life and has kept him in his community.

The small amount of funding through the Special Services at Home program has been an integral part of the family and community supports that the people of Ontario should be rightfully proud to provide. This funding was used to pay support workers to help with Joe's personal care and the occasional outing in the community. The cost of that support is dwarfed by the value it provides to Ontario families.

On April 13, Joe turns 18. An occasion that should be cause for celebration has brought only stress and anxiety. You see, Mr. Speaker, because the government forces families like Joe's to transition from the youth-oriented Special Services at Home program to the Passport program, Joe has to be reassessed and will join many thousands of other Ontario families on excruciatingly long waiting lists. Joe's dad, Maurice, has even had to consider whether to keep his job or not.

There has to be a better way. Across this province, families are facing the prospect of being unable to care for their adult children at home. We are hearing about parents surrendering custody of their adult children with disabilities to long-term-care facilities. Some are bringing their children to respite homes and just not coming back. Without the proper support systems, they cannot meet the demands that are required. These families are being forced to make the horrendous choice to give up. We shouldn't have to accept this current situation as it relates to community supports. We can and must do better.

DILLER TEEN FELLOWS PROGRAM

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Today we welcome distinguished students from the Diller Teen Fellows program, visiting from the Eilat region in Israel. The Diller Teen Fellows program is a 15-month international leadership program for Jewish teens. Dedicated to excellence and education, the program allows North American and Jewish students the ability to participate in educational workshops, community service projects and weekend retreats.

The program includes two distinct seminars. This year, the North American spring seminar involves a 12-day visit from the Eilat fellows, during which North American communities host their Israeli peers. The 2013 Israel summer seminar involves a three-week peer exchange where North American students travel, volunteer and explore Israel with the Eilat fellows and the other 14 Diller groups. Operating in 16 communities in the United States, Canada and Israel, the Diller Teen Fellows program is UJA Federation of Greater Toronto's premier leadership development program for Jewish teens in grades 10 and 11.

In exploring the diaspora relations and participating in hands-on community service projects, students have the opportunity to explore the four Diller pillars: Jewish identity, community service, leadership and Israel. The program creates opportunity for Jewish students of

diverse backgrounds to become effective leaders with a strong Jewish identity and respect for pluralism.

The team fellows showcase a commitment to pluralism, peoplehood, partnership and responsibility to their communities, Israel and the Jewish people.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Ted Arnott: The Premier's announcement on the future of horse racing in Ontario a few days ago was a belated effort that fell short of providing details and the long-term certainty the industry needs to ensure its future in coming years. That she chose to come to Elora for the photo op did, however, demonstrate that the government recognizes the Grand River Raceway as the premier track in the province.

That, and the government's promise to integrate horse racing into the province's overall gaming strategy allow us to plan for the coming year, but it does not atone for the fact that one year ago this very month, without consultation or an honest economic impact analysis, the Liberal government showed callous disregard for the tens of thousands of families whose livelihoods are in one way or another dependent on the industry.

I want to acknowledge the hard work of my colleagues in the Ontario PC caucus on this issue, working with our leader, Tim Hudak, as well as the advocacy of the county of Wellington and the local municipalities in Wellington-Halton Hills. Working together, we've supported the people in the horse racing industry, and their combined efforts have forced the government to implicitly acknowledge the huge mistake that they've made.

But last week the member for Oxford demonstrated his vision for a better future for rural Ontario when along with our leader and other members of the Ontario PC caucus, we released *Paths to Prosperity: Respect for Rural Ontario*. In that document, amongst other ideas to seize the opportunities of the future, we recommend new partnerships which will serve to strengthen the horse racing industry, allow it to thrive and not tear it apart.

That is the promise of the future, with a Progressive Conservative government restoring good government to our beloved province.

MALVERN FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I rise today to inform the House of an exciting development in my riding of Scarborough-Rouge River. Malvern Family Resource Centre is a multi-service agency which has been providing a variety of services and programs to my residents in Malvern and Rouge River for the past 30 years. They offer a range of services and programs for toddlers, children, teens, families and seniors. The centre is a place where kids can play games, do arts and crafts, and learn social skills; where young adults can learn chess or join a basketball league; and where seniors can take a computer course, cook or practise yoga. They offer educational and support

programs for young mothers, income tax clinics for families and resumé services for teens.

Over the years my community has grown significantly, both in size and diversity. The Malvern Family Resource Centre often has to turn away new clients due to capacity issues.

Malvern has been identified as one of the vulnerable neighbourhoods by United Way, and I'm happy that our government is working in partnership with MFRC to support them in building a bigger and better centre.

The new multi-purpose, state-of-the-art facility will exceed Toronto green standards by 25%, but more importantly, it will allow Malvern Family Resource Centre to overcome their capacity issues and continue to serve my community.

I had the honour of participating in the groundbreaking ceremony with many other proud members of the community when construction began on February 13. I'm looking forward to the grand opening.

I thank the government for the support, and look forward to the new facilities.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr. Michael Harris: Recently I had the opportunity to speak at the Ontario Waste Management Association's annual general meeting about the importance of getting waste diversion right for the future of our economy and the environment.

1510

I started by talking about the PC plan to replace the Liberals' inefficient and costly recycling programs with a policy framework that provides more accountability and better results. Under our plan, we would first remove the government-mandated control that industry-funding organizations currently have over recycling—electronics, tires and household hazardous waste—by opening up all three sectors to the free market. We do not believe the government should be in the recycling business. Instead, governments should set measurable and achievable waste diversion targets, establish environmental standards and monitor those outcomes. That's it.

I also pointed out last week that the time has come for Ontario to follow other progressive jurisdictions across Europe and, indeed, here in Canada by incorporating recovery into the province's waste hierarchy. Ontario policymakers need to realize that not all materials are recyclable and, with a finite amount of space, we're going to need to dispose of waste somehow. That's why the PC Party believes it's time to move forward.

I want to thank the OWMA for its leadership on this file and offer my congratulations on a recent release of their white paper called *Rethink Waste: A Blueprint for Harnessing the Economic Benefits of Resource Management* in Ontario.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Mr. Speaker, I want to bring you back to 2003. A series of stories in the *Toronto Star*

exposed the problem of abuse in long-term-care homes. The nature of that abuse was so brutal that it moved the former Minister of Health to tears. Then, George Smitherman promised a revolution in long-term care.

In 2007 came the new long-term-care bill. When we asked where are the minimum hours of hands-on care, we were told that they would be coming out with the regulations.

We waited a few more years, the regulations come out—no minimum standard of hands-on care to be found.

We asked again. The answer was, "We've asked Ms. Sharkey to look into this." Ms. Sharkey does the report, reports back to the House and, yet again, no recommendation for a minimum standard of hands-on care.

We're now in 2013, Mr. Speaker. It's been 10 years. Last week, a resident in a Scarborough long-term-care home killed another resident and injured one more.

Yesterday, a petition was introduced with over 6,000 names calling on the government for minimum hours of hands-on care for long-term-care homes.

We also look at PSWs making barely above minimum wage. Where is the progress, Mr. Speaker? Where is it?

MISSISSAUGA STEELHEADS

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I want to talk about something fun that we did in my riding recently. March 3 was a red letter day for hockey fans in Mississauga, and you might ask, why? That was because the Stanley Cup was brought over to the local hockey arena, the Hershey Centre.

Interjection.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes, it was indeed—for hockey fans, anyway.

It was also a chance for people to take pictures with the Stanley Cup, and I can tell you it was very popular. You might be wondering what the occasion was.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Was Ted Arnott there for a picture?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: He's welcome. The occasion was—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop heckling your own member.

Interjection.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Well, the occasion was that Mississauga's local hockey team, the very well-known, very popular Mississauga Steelheads, was hosting South Asian Day. The reason they were hosting South Asian Day, as you can imagine, is that Mississauga is a very multicultural city, and they want Mississaugans of all cultures attending the hockey games, and so that was the reason that they hosted South Asian Day.

It was, I have to say, very, very successful. Tickets were at a discounted price. People had an opportunity to take pictures with the Stanley Cup. It was really good to see the South Asian community come out and support our local Steelheads.

I wanted to issue an open invitation to hockey fans on all sides of the House. If you ever want to watch a really good hockey game, come over to Mississauga for the Steelheads. I'll take you there.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Camaraderie; I love it.

CANWEST DHI AWARDS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: There was a big celebration in Bruce county this past weekend, and much of it was celebrating the father-son team of Mark and Josh Ireland of Albadon Farms. They were named the top herd managers for Ontario and western Canada in 2012 by CanWest DHI. And I would dare say their wives, Debbie and Marianne, share in this significant achievement.

Mark and Josh, who milk approximately 165 cows, achieved a score of 998 out of a possible 1,000—absolutely incredible.

As part of the CanWest DHI herd management score award, points are assigned for performance in six different management areas. They are milk value, udder health, age at first calving, calving interval, longevity, and herd efficiency.

One thing they've emphasized at Albadon Farms is cow comfort. In 2009, they expanded their facility and have a new freestyle barn with sand bedding, so it's just another day at the beach sometimes for them.

But the score is an excellent barometer of overall herd performance. It's a great tool for monitoring progress from year to year, and it also allows herds to benchmark themselves against others.

This is a great honour for the Ireland family, and I know they will build on this success. But I would also like to recognize Summitholm, the Loewith family from Wentworth county; and Armstrong Manor, the Armstrong family from Peel region: the 2012 second- and third-place CanWest DHI farm families.

The Loewiths hosted our leader, Tim Hudak, and critic Ernie Hardeman at their farm last week when we introduced Respect for Rural Ontario, and I'm very well aware that the Armstrongs are great agricultural ambassadors.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A thing of—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You stepped on my joke: a thing of udder beauty.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

DIETITIANS DAY

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I rise to recognize that tomorrow is the fourth annual National Dietitians Day and that March is National Nutrition Month.

Today is an opportunity to recognize and thank Ontario's dietitians. Every day, these dedicated health care professionals use their specialized knowledge in food and nutrition to improve our health. In addition to highlighting the importance of this profession, Dietitians

Day reminds us that dietitians are the go-to experts for advice on healthy eating.

Our government certainly understands and appreciates the great work of dietitians. That's why we tapped their expertise for our Healthy Kids Panel. In particular, our expert panel benefited greatly from the advice of Phyllis Tanaka, vice-president with Food and Consumer Products of Canada, who is a registered dietitian. I was very happy to receive the Healthy Kids Panel's report and recommendations earlier this month.

Let me say that the panel produced an excellent report. It provides us with invaluable advice on how to address childhood obesity and how to make our kids healthier. I'd like to thank the members of the Healthy Kids Panel for their outstanding work to create a healthier Ontario.

We know that many factors affect children's health. We also know that the issue of childhood obesity is complicated, and it will take a concerted multi-faceted approach to help address it. We need partnership among government, the private sector and the health sector, along with Ontario's parents. It's something that we must address together, because not doing so is simply not an option. Keeping kids healthy today is key to protecting them from chronic illness later in life.

We hope to be able to give kids and their families the tools they need to lead healthier lives now so that they can become healthy adults in the future. Along with my colleague Minister Piruzza, I'm pleased to be co-chairing an interministerial working group that will direct the government's action on implementing many of the report's key recommendations. I can tell you that I'm very excited to co-chair this panel with Minister Piruzza, and I'm looking forward to engaging all colleagues further on this issue.

I know that we can all use a little help to make healthier choices, and dietitians play a critical role in helping people of all ages to be healthier and helping them to avoid chronic diseases like diabetes. They translate the complex science of nutrition into practical solutions for healthy eating and disease prevention.

Dietitians can create personalized meal plans to improve weight and help control blood sugar to prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes. Their training gives them the expertise to help pregnant moms, people seeking to control their blood pressure, those battling eating disorders, and a host of other health-related issues.

1520

I would encourage Ontarians looking for advice on healthier choices to call or visit EatRight Ontario. Eat-Right Ontario is a great source of information where you can ask nutrition-related questions and receive feedback by phone or email from a registered dietitian. Their website, eatrightontario.ca, has some great articles on food and nutrition, meal planning advice, and healthy tips and recipes. You can even sign up to receive an e-newsletter on a monthly basis. EatRight Ontario is just one of the ways that dietitians are helping Ontarians to make healthier choices.

As we celebrate National Dietitians Day, let's applaud and thank dietitians for helping us make Ontario the best

place in North America to grow up and grow old. I'd like our dietitians to know that we're very proud of their contribution to the health of Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for responses.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party to mark March as Nutrition Month in Canada. Every year in March, dietitians across Canada remind us of the importance of healthy eating and the positive impact nutrition has on our health and well-being.

This year's Nutrition Month campaign is dedicated to helping consumers make healthy choices at the grocery store, advising us to plan, shop, cook and enjoy healthy foods. Healthy eating starts at the grocery store. It's where we purchase much of our food and where we're faced with a wide range of choices. As part of Nutrition Month, the Dietitians of Canada are providing Ontarians with practical suggestions to adopt a healthier lifestyle. With increasing rates of diabetes and other chronic conditions, the need for access to dietitians' expertise continues to grow.

The recently released Healthy Kids Panel reports that childhood obesity is now a crisis in Canada and Ontario. About 30% of our children and youth—a staggering number, Mr. Speaker; almost one in every three children—are now at an unhealthy weight. The report states: "The problem is serious for everyone, but it is more severe for boys than girls and for aboriginal children."

The report also warns that "if nothing is done, the current generation of children in Ontario will be the first that has a lower quality of life than their parents. They will develop chronic illnesses much younger and be more affected as they age."

According to the Healthy Kids Panel, obesity does not just hurt individuals but all of society. In 2009, obesity cost Ontario \$4.5 billion—\$1.6 billion in direct health care costs and \$2.87 billion in indirect costs. Dietitians are valuable partners in limiting health care costs by preventing and managing chronic conditions. During Nutrition Month and all year long, dietitians work to get Ontarians back on track by eating well and living more healthfully. The Dietitians of Canada conducted an Ipsos Reid poll in the spring of 2012 and found that 63% of Canadians struggle with making healthier food choices at least half the time they shop, and more than one third struggle at least 75% of the time.

Dietitians advise that a grocery shopping strategy can help save time, money and make healthy eating easier. Dietitians recommend starting with a meal plan, making a grocery list and sticking with it. They recommend reading food labels and choosing nutrient-rich food, and they suggest cooking meals from scratch, even using shortcuts like frozen fruit, ready-to-go salad and pre-chopped vegetables. This is extremely healthy and helpful advice at a time when the Healthy Kids Panel reports that the proportion of meals that Canadians prepare and eat at home declined from 70% in 2001 to 65% in 2008, and the average Canadian visited restaura-

rants 184 times in 2007. Dietitians make these practical recommendations to encourage Canadians to shop and eat well. We know that eating well must be part of an overall strategy to create a healthier Ontario, in addition to a number of other factors.

Dietitians also help provide Ontarians with guidance about healthy eating on the go—a challenge for many families—feeding infants and young children, healthy weight loss, cutting back on salt, and eating well to manage diabetes. Beyond the strategies that dietitians promote during Nutrition Month, they encourage Ontarians to eat healthy all year long, in particular through the program EatRight Ontario.

EatRight Ontario was launched by the Dietitians of Canada in 2007. It provides residents of Ontario with increased access to the advice of registered dietitians by using the contact centre, providing referrals to dietitians in family health teams, community and public health agencies, and private practice. People in Ontario can contact dietitians by email or toll-free by telephone, where dietitians are available to answer questions in over 100 languages about healthy eating.

The EatRight program review found that EatRight Ontario provides a high-quality service that is valued by consumers, intermediaries and stakeholders. I would like to acknowledge the hard work of dietitians across Ontario and all of the valuable work that they do in our province and across Canada.

In addition to celebrating Nutrition Month throughout March, tomorrow—March 20—is Dietitians Day. On Dietitians Day, we recognize dietitians as health care professionals, committed to using their specialized knowledge and skills about nutrition to create a healthier Ontario.

Dietitians of Canada are indispensable members of health care teams, using their expertise to provide advice on proper eating, good nutrition and healthy living. I'm proud to acknowledge and applaud the hard work of dietitians in every community across Ontario.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The month of March is recognized across Canada as Nutrition Month, brought to us by the Dietitians of Canada and thousands of dietitians working here in our province in Ontario.

Studies find that consumers want to eat healthy meals but have trouble navigating the complicated and sometimes confusing information about nutrition. So, this year, Nutrition Month helps shoppers by providing clear advice to support healthy choices at the grocery store and to put their "best food forward"—that's the name of the campaign for this year. Activities are taking place across communities in our province with registered dietitians hosting grocery store tours and promoting cooking events to help Ontarians create healthy meal choices.

Registered dietitians work in many settings in Ontario, from hospitals to community health centres, aboriginal health access centres, a few family health teams—you can find them in many areas of our province. They bring what we call evidence-based nutrition and food advice to consumers, to clients and to patients. As regulated health

professionals, the public can have confidence that somebody who uses the title of registered dietitian has the training and the skills to provide safe, ethical and competent care and advice.

March 21 is the fourth annual Dietitians Day—and it is being celebrated here a day early—to recognize the work of dietitians and the value they bring to our health care system, but most of all to the health of Ontarians. They help prevent and manage chronic disease; they help to promote recovery. Dietitians are what we call a cost-effective investment in the health care system because they help people stay healthy and they help people who struggle with diseases prevent further complications. Promoting access to dietitian care and supporting dietitians to work to their full scope of practice will help us keep Ontarians healthy.

I want to take the few minutes that I have left to talk a little bit about No Time to Wait: The Healthy Kids Strategy, a report that was tabled with us about 10 days ago. In there, there was a three-pronged approach to reducing child obesity. The first one is: Start all kids on the path to health. It basically talks about the importance of supporting pregnant women and their families as well as children after they are born—think breastfeeding. This is something that I have brought forward a number of times into this chamber. We've yet to move on this. I think the time would be great right now.

Second is, change the food environment. This priority basically talks about parents of children that want to give healthy food to their kids, but they often have a hard time because of the environment. So we talk about all the marketing that is done to children, all the point-of-sale promotions, the display of unhealthy food that makes it easy to do impulse buying.

Then, they talk about creating healthy communities. Here, we want to focus on keeping our kids healthy. That looks at things like advancing the Poverty Reduction Strategy, looking at mental health, looking at schools as hubs etc.

1530

So what do I take from this? Well, this morning, Mr. Speaker, we talked about the cancer prevention bill, which is a bill that I had pushed, and the government agreed to give it the push to make it through the finish line, where there are other bills that could do the same. And that would be the Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating bill. That's a bill that I have introduced three times. It has passed second reading and was supported by this House, and it would require all big chain restaurants to post the number of calories beside the items that you eat.

Basically, by looking at an item it is impossible to guess which one has the most calories, which ones are high in sodium. This information is available under the counter or on a poster on the way to the bathroom, or on a website. But if you put it right there on the menu board, if you see, "Big Mac, \$2.99, 450 calories," it makes all the difference in the world, because then people have the right information at the right time. The way we have it

now, one in a thousand use the information; put it on the menu board, one out of two will use it to make healthy decisions. I think this is an easy win. Let's go with it.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for petitions and I will not turn to the member for Durham. I will turn to the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I appreciate that, Speaker. I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions is the result of factors other than Drive Clean, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails,' which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment takes immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Andrew.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from people all over the northeast.

"Whereas the Ontario government has made ... (PET) scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas since October 2009 insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with Health Sciences North, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask our good page Owen to bring it to the Clerk.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas St. Andrew's United Church Bishop's Mills is subject to the provisions of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08;

"Whereas this church and other non-profit organizations in eastern Ontario's rural communities cannot afford to pay for the expensive testing required by this regulation, or the volunteers to transport water samples to provincially accredited laboratories in urban centres hours away; and

"Whereas public health laboratories have the equipment necessary to conduct the testing required under Ontario regulation 319/08;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health amends Ontario regulation 319/08 to allow non-profit organizations to have water testing done at existing public health laboratories at no cost."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Ellen.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

"Whereas the Dog Owners' Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law."

Over 1,000 dogs have been killed by this cruel law, and I couldn't agree more. I'm going to add my name to the thousands of signatures and give it to Nadim to deliver to the table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the 2012 Ontario budget eliminates the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit and the Home Repairs Benefit; and

"Whereas these two programs have been used by thousands of Ontarians across the province as a way of lifting themselves out of poverty and achieving financial independence; and

"Whereas these two programs are in the best tradition of providing Ontarians with a hand up and not a handout when they are in need;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario find some way to restore the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit and the Home Repairs Benefit that aids the Ontarians who depend on these services without endangering the province's ability to return the budget to balance."

I agree with this.

Interjection.

Mr. Todd Smith: Absolutely.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from actually all over Ontario.

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system;

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Leah to bring it to the table.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here.

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until an independent third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects, we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines; and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government place a moratorium on the approval of any wind energy projects and a mora-

torium on the construction of industrial wind projects until further studies on the potential adverse health effects of industrial wind turbines, their effect on the environment, the potential devaluation of residential property are completed; and that any industrial wind projects not currently connected to the grid be cancelled.”

I agree with this petition, and I will affix my name to it.

TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from the people of Nickel Belt. It is short, but it is mighty.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario” to “take the unfair HST off of hydro and home heating bills.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Ali to bring it to the table.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition from a very active individual by the name of Ned MacInnis. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario’s automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

“Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

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“Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

“Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks.”

I affix my name in full support, Speaker.

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’ai cette pétition qui me vient des gens de Nickel Belt :

« Attendu qu’il existe un nombre croissant de cas signalés d’abus, de négligence et de soins de qualité inférieure pour nos personnes âgées dans les foyers de soins de longue durée; et

« Attendu que les personnes ayant des plaintes ont peu d’options, et souvent ne le font pas parce qu’ils craignent des répercussions, ce qui suggère qu’un trop grand nombre de personnes âgées sont laissées dans des situations vulnérables, sans surveillance indépendante; et

« Attendu que l’Ontario est une de seulement deux provinces au Canada où l’ombudsman n’a pas de contrôle indépendant » des maisons de soins de longue durée. « Nous avons besoin de la responsabilité, de la transparence et de la cohérence dans notre système de soins de longue durée. »

Par conséquent, ils demandent à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario d’élargir le mandat de l’ombudsman afin d’inclure les maisons de soins de longue durée de l’Ontario, et ainsi protéger nos aînés les plus vulnérables.

Je suis en accord avec cette pétition. Je vais la signer, et je demande à notre page Ali de l’amener aux greffiers.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas beginning 1 January 2013 WSIB was expanded to include groups of employers and principals who had previously been exempt from WSIB and had private insurance; and

“Whereas this new financial burden does nothing to improve worker safety and only drives up the cost of doing business in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119.”

Speaker, I agree with this petition. There have been over 5,000 signatures, and I will give it to Emily to bring to the table.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s Drive Clean program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

“Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions is the result of factors other than Drive Clean, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas the” Minister of the Environment “has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

“Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result

of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails,' which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment takes immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Andrew.

SPRINGWATER PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we oppose the termination of the operating budget for Springwater Provincial Park in Springwater township on March 31, 2013;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the park remain operating and facilities such as the animal sanctuary, cabins/shelters, playground equipment and ground maintenance remain intact and operating."

Madam Speaker, I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon. James J. Bradley: On behalf of Mr. Milloy, I move that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing April 1, 2013, and ending on September 30, 2013, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation for the 2013-14 fiscal year following the voting of supply.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I have an explanation, if you'd like.

This motion for interim supply would ensure that the government has the ability to pay its expenses while the government's detailed spending plans or estimates are being reviewed by the Standing Committee on Estimates.

As is stated in the motion, if approved, it would give the government the authority to continue operating and financing important programs. This is a temporary measure, and without it, important payments could not be made to institutions and individuals such as financial and income support recipients, children's aid societies, hospitals, schools and municipalities. This motion would allow

the government to continue to provide public services which people of this province rely on.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm surprised to be up so early on this particular subject. We're debating a supply motion. It gives all members the opportunity to talk about the exigencies of operating the province and discuss how our finances are allocated and disbursed, because a supply motion, especially for those watching us at home, is about doing exactly what the Minister of the Environment just said: allocating funds so that the province can operate.

I've got to tell you, given the state of affairs with the current government, I wouldn't allocate funds to any of them. They've got a bunch of retreads over there who have no idea how to monitor fiscal responsibility in this province and they've got some newbies who have drunk the Kool-Aid, so I think we have a bit of a problem in voting for a supply motion like that. Right now, I'm thinking I'm probably not going to, and I've never failed to offer my vote for a supply motion before. But something is actually incensing me that's causing the mood that you hear me displaying today, and it has to do with a serious event that does have to do with funds that come from the provincial government or, correctly, should. This event occurred over the weekend.

I was minding my own business, actually catching up on social media on Friday evening, and saw an urgent message to me from a constituent known to me, and I'll name her because she has given me permission to do so. Her name is Laura Kirby-McIntosh. She's a real activist on the autism file, and the reason is, she has a 13-year-old boy by the name of Cliff who is somewhat severely autistic. Cliff has been in my office on more than one occasion. I remember him when he was a single-digit young boy, six or seven years old, and he'd come in the office to talk about the autism file with his dad, another activist, Bruce. Cliff, being that he is so hyperactive due to the condition from which he suffers, would be bouncing off the walls and ceiling, so I had first-hand information and first-hand knowledge of what Cliff is about. Cliff was also, however, a smart boy, and showed up at political meetings to ask me, in debates, for example, what the government was going to do about addressing his condition, particularly as he got older. He asked that question as any adult might ask that question. I answered that if I am given the privilege and the honour of being part of the government that's formed, we're going to do a heck of a lot more than the government of the day.

I want to tell you what happened to Cliff on Friday night. Cliff had what his mom describes as a meltdown. It has happened before. He's a great big bruising young man and he becomes violent, violent to the point where he attacks other people. They include his dad and his mom and anybody who happens to be in the way. I think everybody here, in a very serious vein, knows that this can happen. Cliff's particular incident on Friday occurred

in the Promenade mall in the middle of Thornhill. It wound up resulting in the police being called, the family having to go to Humber River regional hospital, and Cliff being restrained and drugged. This is how we treat an autistic child in the province of Ontario, and make no mistake: A 13-year-old is a child.

The health minister should be aware of this because she knows that this is a file that has been left fallow. The education minister should be aware of this because the same thing is true there. We do not allocate the funds and we do not allocate the services to deal with kids who are betwixt and between. We can deal, to some extent, with adult autistics. We can deal with junior autistics. But a 13-year-old kid who has a meltdown in a mall winds up in a hospital in restraints. How do we countenance that?

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I know that some of my colleagues on the opposite side of this House are well aware of this incident, because Laura Kirby-McIntosh—the mom in this case—is such an activist and so devoted to her son and to that community of interest that she pushed every button that she could this weekend to get publicity on this file. If anybody was watching CTV News in Toronto over the course of the weekend, they saw Cliff, they saw the McIntosh family, and they saw what the problem is.

There is a community of interest here that is very large, and the amount of money we're talking about is, in relative terms to what's going on in this province, very small. And yet, when you ask, as the CTV reporter did, a government spokesman to talk about what they're doing on the autism file, they say, "Well, we spent another \$5 million last year." It's always a spending answer. Can we ever get a results answer? Can we do something for people like Cliff? Can we do something for a 13-year-old kid who is not, like the rest of us, in control of what he does because of a condition from which he suffers? This is patently unfair.

When I'm speaking to a supply motion and I'm talking on something like this, I'm talking about money that's in the control of the government. If the government chooses to do what it should do by responsibility, by what it's supposed to do—by all that's right and holy—then there shouldn't be Cliffs in the province of Ontario.

Last time I looked, the way OHIP is structured in the province of Ontario, it can't pick and choose who it's going to deal with in terms of their health, and it can't discriminate between mental conditions and physical conditions. If I look at the Education Act, it doesn't talk about educating normal kids; it talks about educating all kids. I don't think that either of those acts is supporting Cliff McIntosh in the way that he has every right to expect to be supported—in the way that his family has every right to expect to be supported in their hour of need. I'm going to tell you, the hour of need for that family, and many families like it, is 24/7. That's what this government is falling down on.

Now, I have a colleague who sits on my left here in the Legislative chamber, Christine Elliott, the MPP for Whitby—Oshawa, and she's our health critic. If ever there

were a dedicated and socially conscious member of this chamber, it would be my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa. She has pushed so hard for a select committee to be struck on this very issue.

I would want to take this opportunity to urge this government right now, under the aegis of a supply motion though it may be, to take a good, hard look and realize that there are people—it can be partisan or non-partisan; I don't really care how you interpret it. You're letting people down, and you can't do that. You can't call yourself a responsible government and do that. So that's my word on Cliff McIntosh, and I hope that heed will be paid.

Let me take the few minutes that I have left in debate to talk a little bit about my area of responsibility, which, by the way, since it's finance, is equally concerned with supply motions and the control of the dollars allocated by government and the expenditures of the province of Ontario.

This government—the McGuinty-Wynne government, as we call it—is responsible for accumulating the largest debt in Ontario's history; that is an undeniable fact. Interestingly, a couple of moments before I came into the chamber for this debate, I was interviewed by a person from our media gallery. The question was, "How does the federal budget"—which I believe is out tomorrow or the next day—"impact the province of Ontario if, in restraining spending, Minister Flaherty decides to cut back, for example, on transfer payments?" I said, "I can't speak for Minister Flaherty. I can say this: The transfer payments and equalization payments going to the province of Ontario in these days and going forward are at an unprecedented level, for the very simple reason that we're now entering the fifth year of Ontario being a have-not province."

I see a smile over on the other side, but again, facts are undeniable. They're sending more money than they've ever sent to Ontario. Over the course of the past five years, we've become the receiver, not the giver; that is an indisputable fact. And if that's the case, then my friend the finance minister is in a boatload of trouble. I think, frankly, that he is anyway, because we have asked on this side repeatedly, "What are you going to do to eliminate the deficit and bring the budget into balance, which you claim you're going to do by 2017?" If, indeed, you're going to do that, there are only two ways of doing it. One is, you have to cut something by way of expenses. We know that there's unbridled spending over there that goes on under this new Premier, as there was under the old Premier—nine and a half years now, and plenty of debt and deficit to show for it.

We're at a \$12-billion deficit projected for this year. There's still a projection out there that nobody has denied is in force, and that's for \$13 billion next year. That would be fiscal 2013-14, the budget that is going to be tabled here sometime in the next month. That leaves fiscal 2014-15 and 2015-16 as the two intervening years before you get to the fiscal year where you're supposed to come into balance. How do you get it down that far in

that period of time? You haven't provided any numbers showing us, so we have no confidence in your ability to do it. If you're not prepared to say, Finance Minister, where you're going to cut or if you're going to raise taxes, which is clearly a bellwether that you put out there when you talked to the media a couple of weeks ago, we can only conclude that it's a combination of both.

That being the case, Ontarians need to be informed, need to take heed and need to understand what they've got running this province. That is a very important aspect that has to be put on the table today as we debate a supply motion that allows this government to continue business as usual.

Speaker, it's anything but business as usual with this government. For my part, I don't intend to vote for this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my privilege every year, for I don't know how many years now, to stand up and talk about an interim supply motion.

I listened, as I always do, to my friend from the Conservative Party as he spoke and indicated that he may not find it within his heart to be able to vote for this interim supply motion at this time. Of course, he rhymed off a litany of reasons why he doesn't trust the Liberal government, and I must tell him that I share some of those very same concerns.

But in the end, we have no option, in my view, but to pass the interim supply motion. If we don't pass the interim supply motion, the first thing, of course, is this government will fall—and there may not be many tears around the province if that happens. But in forcing the government to fall, there is also no money with which to pay for all of the services in this province that the people of this province demand. If there is no interim supply, then that means that the teachers won't get paid in the schools. It means that the hospital beds will close—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Special warrants, Michael.

Mr. Michael Prue: No; I'll get into special warrants. Hear me out.

It means that all of the things people come to rely upon—the plowing of highways in northern Ontario. You can see, even though this is the last day of winter, that it's still snowing out there in Toronto. If it doesn't pass, all of the services that are rendered in this province—all of the people who work for this province will have a very hard time being paid.

The Conservatives are yelling out “special warrants.” Yes, we can do a special warrant, and yes, the cabinet has the authority, in extreme circumstances, to do that. But I think that the responsibility lies with this Legislature. I, for one, do not believe in government by imperial fiat, where the executive makes the decisions and the rest of us who are elected to represent our ridings do not have a say. It is far better in this place that all of the members who are elected by the people of their riding have a say in the raising of taxes, in the spending of monies, in making sure that government works.

It is very easy to stand up, if you are a Conservative in this province, and say you're going to vote against everything. But voting against something as fundamental as an interim supply motion is to just abdicate the responsibility that they have to their electors and hand it over to the Premier and the cabinet. I, for one, am not willing to that, nor is the NDP.

Mr. Randy Hillier: That's a crutch.

Mr. Michael Prue: That's a crutch, perhaps, to the member from Lanark, who finds this a very difficult concept. But it is responsible government, and we are being responsible.

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The motion that has been made by the environment minister is a very simple one: It is interim supply for a period of some five or six months, from April until September of this year. This will give those who want to defeat the government, like my good friend from Lanark here, much opportunity. But it is not an opportunity to stop wages, and it's not an opportunity that he should be seeking to stop people from being paid or for hospitals to be closed or to give up the responsibilities that he has to a Premier that he doesn't support in any way, anyway. I think the Minister of the Environment laid out quite properly in the opening what needs to be done.

I will tell you that we have had an opportunity, some of us on the finance committee, to travel across this province for the last week. We went to Windsor, we went to Timmins, and we went to Ottawa. To the people of Thunder Bay, I want to tell you that I wish we could have gone to Thunder Bay too. There was an editorial on the front page of the paper and inside the paper saying that we should have been in Thunder Bay, and I am in total agreement that the committee should have gone to Thunder Bay, but it was hard to get my colleagues to agree on anything more than three days. If you're only going to go to three days, we picked three hosting communities to which to go, and hopefully, if this budget that the Minister of Finance is going to bring down sometime in the future will come down late enough, perhaps there will be time to travel some more.

I say that with all the greatest respect to the Minister of Finance, because up until this point the finance committee has not been told when the budget is going to be released. We know when the federal budget is coming down; it's coming down in two days. We have known that for weeks and weeks. The finance minister of Canada stood in his place in the House of Commons and said when he was going to release the budget; the finance minister of Ontario has not given us that courtesy. So a group like the finance committee is forced to travel from place to place to place. We are setting up meetings this week—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Finance minister for the coalition government?

Mr. Michael Prue: My friend here talks about the coalition government. He has been more of a coalition to the party opposite than I will ever be.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Oh, take that! Put that in your pipe and smoke it.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I think we should check the voting record, Michael.

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, I have. We have checked that many times. The Conservatives have voted more often with the Liberals over the life of this government, over the nine years, than New Democrats ever have, and that's the way it is.

Anyway, I digress, Madam Chair. The reality is that we have been travelling around and we have been listening to people, and we are going to listen to them some more on Thursday and Friday here in Toronto. You know, people are telling us what they want. They want government to work. They want some very specific things. They're not sabre-rattling like my friends over here, but they are expecting very important things from this Legislature. We were elected a scant—I don't know how many—15 months ago and were told to deliver government for a period of up to four years for the people of this province, and we have an obligation to do so.

We have been listening to students who are talking about the crushing debt load that they have, absolutely crushing, and how they are so fearful of another 5% increase. They have told us of the difficulties they've had and made some remarkable suggestions. They were talking about the 30% grant that the Liberals put out just prior to the last election and which they said was going to solve all the students' problems, but the reality is that less than half of the students actually are eligible for those grants. They've come to us and shown us concrete examples of how if you're a graduate student or a foreign student or if you've been out of school for more than four years, or if you're over 25, none of this applies to you. So people in our post-secondary institutions are not getting the money, and they have said they don't want more money. They understand the difficulties we're having here. But what they are suggesting is, if you're going to give out this grant, give it out to all students, and it would mean that all students would get a 17% reduction. It was a very sensible thing I heard from students.

We had municipalities come forward and say they don't have the tools they need to do the work they need to do and that they're all being starved. We heard problems in the north about MPAC and the big mining companies and forestry companies that have had all of their MPAC assessments reduced to the point that these poor northern municipalities, many of them one-industry towns, are now beggars in their own place. They're going to be forced to go to their residents, and they're going to be forced to have to raise property taxes hugely, hugely, in order to make things meet. They don't want that, and they're looking for help from this government.

We've heard about housing. We've heard about the lack of affordable housing in this province. My goodness, we are dead last—dead last—in terms of affordable housing per capita in all of Canada. Even Prince Edward Island puts us to shame. This government needs to do something. You should be listening about that and it should be in the budget.

But I want to talk about the things that the NDP hopes to see in this budget, because whether this government falls or stays will depend not on us but on you. Where does this government want to go? I have been here for 12 years. I have watched Tories for the first two years and where they wanted to go. I didn't want much of a part of that, let me tell you. It was really quite shocking to see the way that this province was run when I first arrived here. They got rid of one Premier and they got another one, but he wasn't able to really do what he wanted to do either, and there were all kinds of mega-problems. The Conservative Party wasn't too happy with him, but neither were the people of Ontario.

The next thing I knew, we had a Liberal government. I thought, "Well, at least it couldn't be any worse." But you know, over time, I have to say, you've run into the same stuff, the same hubris they had and the same kind of not listening to people that they had. It all comes down to this: You finally come to the conclusion, the 51 of you—and I heard today that Conservatives can't count too well; they said 53, but there are in fact only 51 of you left. There are 51, and that is not in any way a majority. You're going to have to make some concessions, maybe to them, maybe to us.

But if you want to deal with New Democrats, we're asking for five things—five very, very reasonable things. The first thing we want is a balanced approach to balancing the budget. You hired Don Drummond but you didn't listen to him. You hired Don Drummond and you fettered what he was going to tell you, because you said that Don Drummond could only look at the expenditure side and couldn't look at the revenue side.

Well, you know, I've been in governments a long time—12 years here and 13 years in a municipality. For those of you who have been in municipal government—I see my good friend over there, the member from Scarborough East, is it?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Rouge River.

Mr. Michael Prue: Scarborough—Rouge River. My friend from Peterborough: He served on council. You know what it's like to serve in municipal government. You know what it's like, because every budget has to be balanced. Every budget has a revenue side and an expenditure side, and they have to be nearly identical each and every year. We don't do that here in Ontario, and maybe it's time we started acting a little bit more like that. If you value the programs that the people of this province are expecting from you, then you have to protect them. If you protect them, you have to find the money for them. If you don't value the programs—that's the other side of the coin—then get rid of them. Stand up and say you don't want them and then you don't have to have the money for them.

But we think most people in this province like their schools. We think most people in this province like their hospitals. We think most people in this province like the roads on which they drive or walk or cycle, even though in Toronto they're finding it awfully congested. Those things are all government responsibilities. You have an

obligation to do them. So, if you want to continue doing them—and I leave that up to you, because I'll see your budget when some of the back bench sees it, too. When that comes out I want to see where you're going. We believe that Drummond should be followed in much of what he says because Drummond said we have to take issues like the employer health tax loophole and deal with it; we have to deal with that. We have to look at things like the entertainment and the HST, which this government is going to give back to big corporations so that they can go down and watch a Blue Jays game or a Leafs game and write all of that HST off. We think that's a wrong thing to do. We think that if you're going out to blow the wad—all the money on your corporate friends in a box at the SkyDome—you should be willing to spend that money, not the taxpayers. The taxpayers shouldn't be spending that. We have identified some \$1.3 billion of what we call "low-hanging fruit." All you have to do is just have the will to do it.

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We have looked at other things. Let me see. The next one: the five-day home care guarantee. This is absolutely essential. We know that in some places in northern Ontario they have a 262-day wait. Toronto may not be too bad. I understand that Toronto is only 10 or 11 days, but we, New Democrats, think it should be five days across this entire province. We think that people who are frail or elderly or who are in hospital and who need to be released to their homes should have a home care guarantee. We think that having a home care guarantee will be good for the province and, in the end, will likely save money. If you can get people out of the institutions, the hospitals and the long-term-care facilities and put them in their own homes, then that is going to save money.

God knows, a country like Denmark—Denmark hasn't built a single long-term-care facility in the last 15 or 20 years because they, as a country, made a conscious decision to let people grow old and to provide the care in their homes. They have done that, and they have saved much more money than we can even imagine.

But are we looking at that? No. We continue to argue about other things, and we continue not to have a five-day home care guarantee. That's what New Democrats are looking for in this budget as well. We believe that can be done. In the end, it's not going to cost a lot of money, but it can provide a much better quality of life and service to the people of this country and of this province, especially our old, our elderly and our infirm.

New Democrats are looking for on-the-job training for youth. There is a 20%-or-more unemployment rate for those under 25 in many communities in this province. We need to do something. We need to make sure that young people have an opportunity.

Last night, I was here in the Legislature. We went down to the interns, those wonderful people who work for some of us if we're lucky enough throughout the year and who come here with great, great hope and great faith in the system, wanting to learn, wanting to contribute. I met some of the interns from past years and I asked them

what they were doing. Some have been very successful in terms of morphing from this place into jobs as consultants. One was in teacher's college, although she told me quite bluntly that although she's going to teacher's college, the likelihood of her getting a full-time position as a teacher, which is something she has always wanted to do, will take at least five years because that's the way it is—at least five years because of some of the policies of this government in order for her to work her way through as a supply teacher, work her way up through the chain and do all of those things. A bright, personable, smart woman, and that's what's going to happen.

We can change the policies to make that better. We can make sure that people like that have an opportunity.

I met a young man last night who has finished university and is unemployed. He gave me his card and asked if there any work he could do for me or anyone else I knew, free of charge. I look at that and I wonder how many of us in our lifetime would have taken a job with absolutely no pay just to have a chance to be out there, just to have a chance to show somebody what you can do—absolutely no pay. I think people who are stuck in that position are being ripped off, quite frankly. Even if they got minimum pay and went to learn some of the skills, they would be contributing and would be able to look after themselves. But to find yourself in a position at 20 or 25 years of age with a huge student debt, out there without a job, with no prospect of a job, unless you do it for nothing, and that you're going to have to live at home or continue to put money on a credit card, is just unfathomable.

I had a gentlemen come into my office last week. He wanted to know whether I could help him find a job, and of course it's very difficult to help someone find a job. He did not have all the skills that many people have. He finished high school many years ago now; he has just turned 50. He worked in the same factory for nearly 25 years, and the factory closed down. It was a big company. He got a pittance of a severance—he said around \$4,000; he went through that pretty quickly. He is having a terrible time finding someone to hire him. He's having a terrible time accessing career opportunities by going back to school.

He's back living with his parents. He's 50 years of age; he's looking after his father—who has since, just recently, died—and his mother, who is infirm as well. This is his life, and he wanted to know what I thought he could do. I said, "You know, many people are going to Alberta, although that's drying up too. Many people are going to other places. The only place I know in Ontario where there's relatively full employment," I understand from my colleague Gilles Bisson, the member for Timmins-James Bay, "is that the mines in and around Timmins are still hiring." I suggested that to him: That was probably his only option. He was a little reticent to do that, because at 50 years of age he didn't know whether his old body could take it, but he was going to look into that. That is his life.

We are looking for on-the-job training, not only for youth—but we're concentrating on that—but also for the 50-year-olds of this world in Ontario who, through no

fault of their own, have found themselves unemployed and with virtually no prospects. We need to do much more. We need to make companies understand that we expect something of them.

We know that the finance minister of Canada, Jim Flaherty, has often spoken about the hoarding of money by corporate Canada. We know that there are billions and billions and billions of dollars sitting in strongboxes in places in corporate Canada, doing absolutely no good, and we know that this government has followed the Conservative mantra for far too long in talking about corporate tax cuts. Today I heard in question period the bragging that we have the lowest rate in all of North America for corporate taxes. Well, we do, and we have one of the highest unemployment rates in many of our provinces as well. The two do not mesh. The two do not make sense, and I will say that we expect this government to do something about that, or, when it comes to budget day, you cannot count on NDP support.

We also want to talk about the 15% auto insurance. IBC is here today. I expect everybody is going to be downstairs having a glass of wine, perhaps, or talking to them about insurance. It's a pretty noble industry here in the province of Ontario and in Canada. They gave us all a nice little book. I wasn't going to read this into the record, but I think it says some pretty important things, and maybe we should be asking some questions.

Their industry in Ontario is worth, according to them, \$44.7 billion—no, that's just the policies they wrote out. The industry in Canada is \$141.5 billion, and profits for the last eight years have averaged 9.5%. That's after-tax profits—after they paid their employees and everything else. I wonder how many manufacturers in Ontario can say they've made 9.5% profit for the last eight years through a major recession—the biggest recession we've had. How many can say that? That's their own book; that's what they do. The government allows that. I'm sure it's a good thing to make that kind of profit. Maybe some people have investments in those companies. Maybe I do too, though all of mine are through the bank, so I have no idea what they're investing in—and I care not to know, actually, sometimes.

That's the kind of profits that are being made, but this government isn't talking a lot about giving people a reduction in their automobile insurance, and I wonder why. They passed all kinds of laws a couple of years ago. I remember the then finance minister standing in his place and talking about how wonderful it was, how this was going to work, how it was going to save an industry which makes an average of 9.5% profit each and every year for the last eight years and how it was going to end fraud, corruption and everything else. But at the end of the day, insurance rates are still going up and the level of claims have gone down. Ordinary people are asking what's in it for them; we, New Democrats, are asking what's in it for them, too. We expect some huge movement on this file.

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We will be talking to the insurance people tonight. I don't dislike them; I think they're wonderful people and

they are entitled, as any industry, to see a profit and maximize the rate of return for their shareholders. But we have to ask, in an industry which is mandatory—because you cannot drive a car in this province unless you have insurance. We mandate that every single person who has a driver's licence and who drives a car must have insurance. Because they have to have insurance, they have to go to one of these guys, and because they go to one of these guys, the profit is inherent.

We have an obligation in this Legislature to make sure not only that the companies are successful, but more so that people who are ordinary consumers have that same opportunity to pay a fair rate. We pay the highest rates in Canada. This government has to start looking at the consumer in the same kind of way that you once looked just at the insurance companies.

I have promised 15 minutes to my colleagues. Those are some of the things we want to say. We are going to allow the interim supply bill to pass because it needs to pass.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm sorry to disappoint the Conservatives, but budget day is another matter, and we are waiting to see what you have to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to be here today to talk about the motion for interim supply. I just want to compliment my good friend with whom I spent a lot of time at the city of Toronto. In fact, we were seatmates, if I remember correctly. We sat beside each other for many years.

In his opening remarks, he has recognized the importance of this bill and the fact that this is a routine bill that we actually bring forward every year just before budget time. It is a motion that would allow the government, ministries and legislative offices to operate from the beginning of the upcoming fiscal year until the time that you pass a budget.

The motion for interim supply would give the government the necessary spending authority to finance the programs it has set out, fulfill its commitments and put its vision into practice. For example, it would ensure the government can make important payments to institutions and individuals, including nursing homes, hospitals, doctors, schools, municipalities, financial income support recipients, people with disabilities and special needs, children's aid societies and those who rely on various benefit programs, such as the Ontario Child Benefit. Without this interim supply motion being approved, these important payments could not be made.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to remind everyone that this motion is temporary. It would provide temporary spending authority, which is required at the beginning of the fiscal year, and would cover the period only from April 1, 2013, to September 30, 2013. This temporary spending authority is required to allow the government to operate while the Legislature conducts its review of the government's detailed spending plans through the work of the Standing Committee on Estimates.

It is important to note that all expenditures incurred under the authority of this motion would be consistent with the upcoming 2013 budget and the 2013-14 estimates, and eventually authorized in the Supply Act for the 2013-14 fiscal year. When we complete this debate, I'm going to urge all members of the Legislature to support this motion, because without this necessary spending authority, the government would not be able to provide the public services upon which the people of this province rely.

So what does this motion mean for the people of this province? The interim supply motion means the government would be able to continue operating and financing our important programs. It means nursing homes would continue to provide people with the care they absolutely need. It means that doctors would continue to deliver results to their patients. It also means low-income families would continue to receive the Ontario Child Benefit payment to provide for their children. In short, it means the government would be able to continue to provide essential public services province-wide.

I would like to provide a bit of context.

The new government will restrain program spending to reduce Ontario's debt-to-GDP ratio, while recommitting itself to eliminating the deficit by 2017-18.

This year's budget will be about finding common ground. It will be about working with people, organizations, associations and other stakeholders to develop an effective plan that is best for Ontario. We have opened channels for dialogue through our expanded pre-budget consultations and finance committee discussions. We are committed to hearing from Ontarians their views on creating jobs and improving services while eliminating the deficit.

We are also committed to finding common ground among the parties within this Legislature. This year's budget will be about working together to balance fiscal responsibility with fairness for the people of this province.

We are on track to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. In fact, Ontario's deficit is now \$3 billion lower than projected in last spring's budget. This is the fourth year in a row that we are ahead of our fiscal targets. This is important because eliminating the deficit will strengthen our economy, and a strong economy creates good jobs and builds strong communities across our great province.

The fundamentals in Ontario are very strong. The province has gained 415,500 net jobs since 2009, the recessionary low. In February, employment in Ontario rose by 35,300 jobs. This included an increase in youth employment of 21,000 jobs. In fact, Ontario created nearly 70% of all new jobs in Canada in February and we continue to outperform the United Kingdom, the United States and the Great Lakes states in job creation.

Ontario is home to many diverse and thriving sectors. Our province has the second-largest information and communication technology sector in North America, employing more than 270,000 people and accounting for half of all this sector's work in Canada. Ontario's life

sciences sector is also the second-largest in North America, and right here in Toronto we have North America's second-largest financial services sector.

It is important to recognize the successes of our growing economy, but we still have to keep job creation in mind with every decision that we make. That's why this government has been hosting jobs round tables across the province. These sessions focus on working with businesses, entrepreneurs and local leaders to generate more jobs and opportunities in Ontario communities, and that's the trajectory we have to maintain: open and collaborative discussions to develop more job opportunities for the people of this province.

I'd also like to take a moment to talk about the direction this government is taking. The new Ontario government's central objectives are fiscal responsibility, economic growth and increased employment. This is the foundation upon which we will continue to build the best education and health care system in the world. This is the foundation upon which we will show the world that Ontario's finances are in steady hands.

The new Ontario government is committed to a fairer society. This means that all the people of Ontario should have the opportunity to have good jobs and live in strong communities, and the new Ontario government is committed to boosting innovation and growth.

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The educated, skilled and diverse people of this province are our province's greatest strength. This government's creation initiatives will support the earning potential of all men and women of this province and empower our industries to expand. This is the direction the new government has taken, because this government believes that Ontario is a place of endless possibilities.

I encourage everyone to support this interim supply motion, because it helps to put in place the building blocks we need to provide the best and most dependable public service to the people in our province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise today on behalf of the residents of Dufferin-Caledon to comment on the government's interim supply motion that we are debating before the House this afternoon.

I would like to start by acknowledging that we are in the sacred chamber of the Ontario people's Legislature, discussing the use of Ontario people's dollars—not the Liberal dollars, but the people's money.

The particular motion before us, moved by the Minister of the Environment, would authorize the Minister of Finance to pay the salaries of civil servants and other necessary payments, pending the voting of supply, for the period of April 1 until September 30, but really what we need to be discussing today is where we're going in terms of where that money is distributed, and how and why. These payments would be charged to the proper appropriations for the 2013-14 fiscal year.

A relatively straight motion, granted, Speaker—basically the government is asking the House's permission to

spend money for paying salaries and making other necessary payments, but I don't want business to continue as usual in Ontario. It's not working. We are just moving ourselves further into debt, and it does not take Ontario on a new path, a path away from the fiscal mess we've been living in for the last eight and a half years.

In the interest of context, I think it's worthwhile to discuss the larger issue at hand, namely, this government's disastrous fiscal policy. We were told a year ago that our deficit was heading towards \$30 billion and our debt would skyrocket to over \$400 billion if we didn't change our current path. We haven't done that, Speaker. Despite what the government memos are saying, the government we have across the aisle is saying that nothing is new. The only thing that is new is the person who is sitting in the Premier's chair. There has been no change in direction, no change in policy and certainly no change in fiscal realities. We see rampant overspending, and still we see a total lack of awareness by the government when it comes to the job crisis in our province.

I would like to focus on the overspending for the moment, because, as I mentioned at the start of my remarks, what we are really discussing here this afternoon is the use of Ontario money. We must never forget that the dollar amounts we discuss in this place—and sometimes the amounts are staggering—that every last cent of these monies belongs to and came from the people. It is their money. Each and every one of us here in this place is entrusted to remain forever vigilant with these precious dollars, and I might add that those precious dollars are becoming fewer and fewer because fewer and fewer people are employed in the province of Ontario under the Liberal government.

Moreover, I would argue that each of us has a responsibility to ensure that the government never spends more than is absolutely necessary and thus allows the people to keep as much of their own money as possible to spend as they see fit. I believe in these principles, because I believe no bureaucrat, no politician, no government can better plan for persons' lives than they can themselves. I believe that each and every Dufferin-Caledon resident, and each and every Ontarian, has their own life to live and their own goals to pursue. I believe that every Dufferin-Caledon family has their own budget to manage and their own home to maintain.

The problem is that every fee this government charges, every tax this government levies, not only takes precious resources away from Ontario families, but also hinders Ontarians' ability to save for their future, invest in a company or even just buy a loved one something special.

The fact is, the government already takes enough money out of Ontarians' paycheques and businesses. That is why it is so alarming to hear the Minister of Finance repeatedly refuse to rule out any new tax increases in his upcoming budget. As recently as today's question period, he would not say whether he intends to increase taxes in the upcoming spring budget. It is unnerving that we have the fiscal reality we have and yet the finance

minister refuses to say, "No. Full stop. We won't be gouging any further money from Ontario residents." The notion that the Liberal government, after first doubling Ontario's debt and now well on its way to tripling it, would have the gall to take yet more money from Ontario families and businesses is outright shocking. It shows plainly that the Liberal government just doesn't get it.

This is best illustrated by the fact that in the government's recent throne speech, the word "deficit" was only mentioned once in the entire speech. Imagine, a deficit that has gone up exponentially under this government, and yet they won't even acknowledge it in their throne speech. For me, personally, Speaker, that was really the final straw.

I would say I was shocked at the level of recklessness when it comes to government spending, but then again, the current Premier was in the previous McGuinty cabinet—no change. So, sadly, I'm not surprised at the total lack of regard for getting Ontario's finances under control. They are simply not motivated to do it.

People contact my office every day with the issues important to them. Many times, these are the issues they worry about on a daily basis. And when they hear about things like the Liberal government wasting a billion dollars cancelling power plants to save a couple of seats, they are disgusted. They're disgusted because they do not understand how the Liberal government could forego all accountability to them, the voters, the people of Ontario.

Allow me to share a couple of examples from my riding that I have recently come across in Dufferin-Caledon. A husband and wife contacted me because their son had been diagnosed with autism—actually, probably very similar to our finance critic—and they need an educational assistant constantly for their son. Their son attends daycare, and at first, he had a full-time educational assistant, or EA, with him. Soon, it was cut to half days only. Then it was cut to two half days per week, which they were promised their son would receive for 12 weeks until March 2013. Yet, in mid-February, they were told that because a staff member left and there was no funding available, their son would now only have an EA for one half day per week. Keep in mind that this was a family that was initially guaranteed an EA every single day, five days a week.

This is the face of rampant overspending and deficits. This boy who our province has now left behind because he doesn't get the attention or the learning he deserves, this boy who now spends his day without assistance—this boy is why it is absolutely imperative that we get reckless government spending under control. We can't help this family if we don't have the money.

This boy is also why the government of Ontario's throne speech ought to mention the word "deficit" more than once. If we do not address our deficit, if we do not reverse the ever-increasing mountain of debt, then the day will inevitably come—and make no mistake, if we do not reverse our course, it is inevitable—when we will have ceased debating on how best to help this boy, because by that time we will no longer have it in our

capacity to assist him at all. On that day, not only will we have failed him, but we will have failed our constituents, we will have failed our beloved province, and we will have failed in our responsibilities here.

But that day doesn't need to come, because there is a party in this chamber that recognizes this central threat to Ontario's future. It is a party that has released a dozen bold, innovative ideas, through our white papers, to turn Ontario around, ignite our economy and get the government back to focusing on what really matters. It is a party that is led by the only leader in this chamber who won't run from the difficult decisions, who will protect the things we hold most precious, and who will do what needs to be done to make sure Ontario will lead again. That leader, of course, is Tim Hudak, and that party is the Progressive Conservative Party. Only Tim Hudak and the PC caucus have a bold plan to rigorously tackle the greatest jobs and spending crisis in Ontario's history. The PC caucus is the only caucus in the chamber with the desire and focus to focus with utter precision on fixing the terrible financial mismanagement of the Liberal government.

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It is because of that disastrous fiscal mismanagement, Speaker, that I cannot support the government motion we are now debating. I refuse to support the fiscal policies of this government. Therefore, I cannot vote in favour of the motion before us.

Time and time again, the PC caucus has proposed bold solutions to get our economy back on track and government spending under control. Each time, the Liberal government, whether it's Dalton McGuinty or Kathleen Wynne, has blinked, looked the other way and refused to support our initiatives to get Ontario back on track. That hardly sends the message of wanting to work together.

Today, I, for one, refuse to support their stubborn insistence to keep Ontario on the wrong track. For that reason, I will not be supporting the interim supply motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to speak to this motion and to speak to some of the very serious concerns that I have with the direction the government is taking.

I'd like to start off by saying that I find it very unfortunate that the members of the Conservative caucus are trying to turn this routine motion into a political issue and an opportunity to defeat the government. You know what? I think it really speaks to their priorities. They want an election, pure and simple. There's nothing else. I think it's unfortunate, not only for all of us here but for the people of this province, that the official opposition is continually trying to disrupt the House. They have intentionally tried to create dysfunction, not because it serves the interests of the people of this province but because it serves their own narrow, partisan interest.

It's a double standard. I sat here and I listened to the member from Dufferin—Caledon talk about the precious

respect that the PCs had for the tax money that the people of this province pay. All the while, they're racing towards an expensive election without even trying to make this government work. It's upsetting not just because they're not here to represent the interests of those who brought them to this House; it's upsetting because they can't even practise what they preach. They aren't even willing to try to work together to get results.

They're continually up in arms screaming, shouting, accusing the government of wasting taxpayer money for politically motivated reasons—

Interjection: Gas plants.

Ms. Sarah Campbell:—such as the cancellation of the gas plants—proves my point—in Mississauga and Oakville. Yet what are they asking us to do? They're asking us to force an election—not in a while, over the budget, over some principled issues that we're discussing, but they want us to force an election right now that will cost hundreds of millions. Why? That is in hopes of enhancing their own political fortunes.

You know what? It doesn't work for the people of this province. It won't work when we shut down schools, when we shut down hospitals and when we would vote to not pay our obligations. To me that's pretty financially irresponsible.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: No, Speaker, I can't hear myself. I'm wondering if you could maybe call for some order in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the members to respect the speaker.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you.

Getting back to the main motion, this motion will allow us to stay the course. It will allow us to keep paying the bills until a new budget is brought forward. But the simple fact is that staying the course is completely unacceptable. For years, we have been flooded with the rhetoric about righting this wayward fiscal ship, about making tough choices. But time and time again, people in the north are left with a very distinct feeling that we are being left to bear the brunt of these cuts while seeing this government and the government before it push our basic needs to the side. When we talk about cost-cutting and scrimping, there's an assumption that our basic needs will continue to be met in the north, that we can continue to count on the essentials being there: access to health care and education, affordable hydro, jobs, that our roads will be safe for travelling in the winter and that we will have access to the basic essential government services provided by ServiceOntario.

In my riding alone, for people living in dozens of communities, in order for them to access their driver's licence, they actually have to take a plane to fly to another community so that they can get their driver's licence. To me, that doesn't sound like fair and equal access. The truth of the matter is that we can't count on it. We can't count on this government to provide the

basic supports for First Nation communities, for municipalities, for business and for other industry, and we can't count on access to provincial parks or protection from dangerous wildlife such as bears—even when they're seen wandering on school grounds—because this government claims it needs to act in a fiscally responsible manner.

We're told this, but we watch tens of millions of dollars being wasted by Ornge air ambulance, a billion dollars being wasted through the mismanagement of eHealth, and hundreds of millions of dollars being thrown out the window to cancel gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville to appease voters during an election. That is what is truly sickening: The government has limitless dollars to spend when it comes to its own political fortunes, but who has to pay? Northerners have to pay, northerners who are struggling and have been struggling for years—

Mr. John Vanthof: All northerners.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: —that's right, all northerners—to keep up with the soaring hydro rates.

I want to put a really novel idea out there right now. If it was people in Mississauga and Oakville who didn't want these plants, maybe it should be the people in Mississauga and Oakville, or even the ministers or the party representatives from the Liberal Party, who should have to pay for the cost of this cancellation. They should maybe put it on the municipal bills or take it out of their salaries, because it is entirely, 100%, unacceptable to ask anybody who is living in the north to pay so much as one cent for the costs associated with cancelling this plant.

If you want to see a really telling picture about the situation that has been created, let's look at the gas plants. In Mississauga and Oakville, people are screaming, "We don't want it! We don't want it!", while in a place like Thunder Bay, they would love to have their gas plant back. They want the jobs. We in the north want the jobs. We want the opportunity and, frankly, we need it, because one glimmer of hope that we have is that the mining sector will take off in the north. But in order to capitalize, we need an investment in energy infrastructure, and we don't have the supply right now to meet the anticipated demand.

Maybe it's time that the government started spending money to build something, not take it away, but in order to accomplish that, we need this government to listen, and that's something that clearly isn't happening. We can't even get the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to come anywhere near our region. In deliberating in preparation for a budget that is supposed to, in theory, benefit the whole province, we can't even get on the tour. The closest stop is 10 or 12 hours' drive away, and they're wondering why we in northwestern Ontario are just a little bit upset? Part of the reason for this is because the Liberal and the Conservative members on the committee don't want to hear what we have to say, because—why? Because it would add an extra day. It would just add an extra day to the hearings, and that is unacceptable.

This past fall, the member from Nickel Belt, who is my party's health critic, toured the region with me, and we held a series of town hall meetings on the status of health care. When it comes to services, aside from maybe education, I think health care ranks pretty high up on that list. In Atikokan, one of the biggest concerns we heard is that families are being forced to travel to Thunder Bay to access maternity services. No friends or family are around to share the joy or offer any kind of support, and sometimes even spouses can't make it. It's because this province says that it's cheaper to deliver those services three hours east.

In Fort Frances, we heard complaints that people are being charged by their doctor to do paperwork, and in Kenora—in all the communities—we heard about how people have waited years to find a family doctor, and they still have no success. They're being referred to emergency rooms for front-line services or, even worse, some are travelling to other provinces as far away as not Manitoba but Saskatchewan to get prescriptions renewed, because the system, based on the southern Ontario model, does not work. Health centres in Rainy River and Ear Falls face closures or the threat of closures because of doctor shortages, and some, like those in Pickle Lake, aren't even operating because the community has been without a doctor for years. In Ignace, where the health centre is doing a phenomenal job—such a phenomenal job that people are driving hours from communities across the region to access their primary health care services there—they're facing a potential crisis because two years ago one branch of government, the Ontario Realty Corp., made the choice to double the rent without any kind of consultation or warning.

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I'll be honest—I see the Minister of Infrastructure sitting across the way. I did sit down with the Minister of Infrastructure and the Minister of Health, and it sounds like they are earnestly and very sincerely willing to work with me to rectify the situation, and for that I am truly grateful. But it does go to show you some of the situations that we're facing, and all of this—

Interjections.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: That's going a little bit too far.

All of this because we're focusing on the bottom line. It's well time that we focused on results, because our basic needs are not being met.

Another issue that we heard when I did my health care town halls across the region with MPP France Gélinas is home care. Home care is an issue all across the north. Some people across the north are waiting up to six months to access home care. If we were to have better access to home care, that would be good for the individual, it would be good for the provincial system and it would be good for the treasury. And it's something that we can do. We can implement a five-day home care guarantee; we just need the government will to do it.

Another basic need is auto insurance, which in the north is an essential service. It's essential for everybody who has a car, but in the northwest and in the north it's

especially essential because we don't have public transit. You have no idea how frustrating it is for people across the north who absolutely must have auto insurance—they must have a vehicle, they must have snow tires and they must have summer tires, and they must have all of these expenses—to see the rate go up in 2010 as a result of this Liberal government, and then to see their coverage go down. It's no surprise that we later found out that the changes that were made to the insurance industry saved auto insurance companies \$2 billion in the year 2011 alone, while at the same time charging northerners a 5% increase. That is simply unacceptable.

It's also unacceptable for people in the northwest to look at the auto insurance rates that are being charged to people living in Manitoba, a one-hour drive in one direction. To see the rate be substantially less expensive is really, really frustrating. We can do something about it. We can and we should reduce auto insurance rates by 15%.

Just last week, I spoke to a young male who was paying \$4,000 a year for auto insurance. You hear that rate and you think, "Oh, my goodness. He must have a whole bunch of accidents or infractions," but he's got a perfectly clean driving record. He has done nothing wrong. This year he'll be turning 25. He's looking forward to the modest drop. I think he said he might save about \$100 a month or something to that effect, which really isn't all that much. He could definitely benefit from an extra 15% decrease. It's something that we simply have to do.

Which brings me to my final point: employment for young people. We have an aging population in northwestern Ontario, and it's aging at a rate that's faster than ever. I think the reason why is because we have the loss of so many young people. Young people go away; they leave our communities to attend post-secondary school. In Kenora–Rainy River, we don't have a university institution. We do have some access to Confederation College, but by and large, there are a lot of people who leave their communities and go to places like Thunder Bay or the University of Manitoba or Winnipeg to pursue their education, and they don't come back in the summers. It has to do with the fact that there just aren't the summer jobs there waiting for them anymore, and so when they graduate, they often stay away. Sometimes it's because they continue on with the jobs and the experiences that they have gained while they were away, but other times they stay away because they look for jobs elsewhere. They're not confident that there will be a job for them when they come back.

There are things we can do, like our plan that would provide young people aged 16 to 26 years with an entry point to long-term education. It would create 25,000 jobs over two years. Participants would learn new skills and they would earn \$9,360 in a six-month job. The experience would last a minimum of four to six months. There would be on-the-job skills training, and it would provide them with predictability. There would be 30 hours of work per week and they'd make at least \$12 an hour, which is a fair wage.

We need this. Young people need this. Ontarians need this. But in order to do this, we need the Liberals to come on board. We need to see these results.

I will be supporting this interim supply motion because we need to pay the bills. It would be financially irresponsible for us to say, "You know what? Schools, hospitals, people who are currently working for the government: You don't deserve your paycheque." "Oh, you have a medical emergency? Well, there's no hospital for you to go to."

That is just foolish and it is just political games. It's something we don't deserve. We deserve better in this province, and we deserve real results for the people of Ontario. That's what our caucus will be fighting for.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As many of you know and some of you have teased me about, I've spent my life in three provinces. I grew up in Quebec; I lived in Ontario for many years; moved to Manitoba and moved back. As I've often said, I spent a lot of my teenage years on a dairy farm my father had in Alexandria, Ontario, shovelling manure, and some days I think it was the best preparation I had for this place.

One of the things that surprised me about elected officials in Ontario is their reluctance to stand up for their own province. To be fair, under Liberal governments, under Conservative governments and under NDP governments in this province, we have a record of spending less on our citizens per capita than any other province in Canada. I'm going to say that again: One of the legacies of this House is that people in Ontario spend less money on education, on health care, on just about everything.

Here's the great unfairness for Ontario of Confederation. When I was mayor of Winnipeg, they were building a multi-million-dollar floodway, which the member from Kenora–Rainy River would be aware of because it's a short drive from her constituency. Do you think there's the tax base in Winnipeg to build a piece of infrastructure that large? There isn't. There's a human rights museum being built there, at a cost of \$360 million. The \$18 million a year in subsidies to operate it are coming from the people of Canada. Every year, the people of Ontario take \$22 billion out of their wallets and they give it to other Canadians.

We have had in Canada recently a tax policy that is not incenting diversity of our economy but is capitalizing on resource exports, whether that's chromite or nickel—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Madam Speaker—or oil or natural gas.

My friend Al Duerr, the mayor of Calgary, used to say humorously to people when he used to meet with Mel Lastman and myself, "It's not too hard for us in Alberta. We put holes in the ground and oil comes up, and we get a cut that is the envy of the country." Yes, Alberta, which is—quite frankly, only in Canada. It's the only country in

the world in which subnational governments like provinces have control and get energy royalties and get the resource royalties. No other country in the world gives that right primarily to its subnational governments. So we do not get the normal benefits of shared energy revenues that—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: They do not.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: No; only what they can negotiate with their national government.

You can imagine that Alberta has never been really interested in negotiating with the government of Canada about sharing those oil revenues. And you just have to ask the federal Liberal Party, in the aftermath of the national energy policy, exactly what happens when you try to do that in Canada.

1700

I really do think that one of the things we can do in a nonpartisan way—anyone who has sat on this side of the House, and that's every party in this Legislature—is acknowledge two things: We are a net exporter of taxes—we are not the have-not province; we are very much the biggest have province—and that we've given a lot of our tax revenue away through our partnership, and that we've always been the most federalist province in this country in some ways. Going back to Bill Davis, to David Peterson, to Bob Rae, to Dalton McGuinty, our Premiers have proudly stood up for this country in the face of separatists next door—separatists who have a child care system and lower tuition and all those kinds of things, often with Ontario tax dollars subsidizing them. Often, immigration and settlement, which we get the largest part of, we get the least help with. Our First Nations people often get less attention from our national government than those in other provinces. I'm not whining or complaining about it. I'm simply saying that we in Ontario should be proud of our government, whatever party has been in power, that we are the most prudent spenders of money—always have been—and spend less money.

Madam Speaker, we have increased spending. Where has that money gone? The biggest cost: \$6.8 billion, to double the amount of money going into our universities and colleges—doubling it. The \$6.8 billion went into colleges and universities. My friends in the third party pointed out earlier today in question period that you could probably put a lot more money in there because students still have high debt levels and there are still challenges there. But we have literally doubled it, after it was reduced by about 20%, 30% or 40%, especially in the north.

My friend from Kenora-Rainy River made some very positive points, and I want to particularly appreciate the point that she pointed out. This is a supply bill. This is usually something we don't even debate. It passes on a voice vote. I think there has been sincerity from the New Democratic Party in wanting to work collaboratively to try to make this Legislature work, and I think we're

trying to respond as a party and as the government to work with you on that, and I appreciate the co-operation and the maturity you bring to this House. She pointed out, how do you politicize a supply bill? How do you, as the official opposition, say to the government and the third party, "We want to work with you, but we're going to politicize the supply bill and have a vote on the supply bill"? This is a complete contradiction. The leader of the official opposition should stop trying to tell Ontarians that he's working collaboratively and wants this Legislature to work, because he's clearly the one person who doesn't.

I was interviewed today by a couple of journalists who asked me what we felt about the desire of the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Niagara West-Glanbrook, to build a highway in the mid-Niagara Peninsula. This is a highway that all the studies have said would have very little traffic on it, is the least desirable of all the options and the most expensive, but it runs through his constituency. The member for Burlington and the member from Halton have both sent letters to this ministry, saying, "We'd really prefer you didn't do it because it would cause horrible traffic problems in our constituency." It's okay to build a highway to nowhere, that no one needs, in your constituency, at the cost of hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: If the minister could actually stick to debating the motion in front of us and not waver off of—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): He is. The supply motion is very liberal in its breadth.

Continue.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

When everyone talks about cutbacks, they're always talking about cutting back in someone else's backyard—I can tell you, by the number of requests I get and the number of you in this House who are working on trying to replace bridges.

I also want to make one point, as well. Madam Speaker, if you went up to Kenora-Rainy River, London-Fanshawe, Halton—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Don't forget Lanark.

Hon. Glen R. Murray:—Lanark, Quinte, Haliburton, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and everything in between, you would find, as the official opposition has pointed out, that this government is spending more on infrastructure. We used to spend \$4 billion; we're now spending about \$13 billion a year. I have letters from almost every member of this Legislature that have a bridge in a small town that desperately needs to be replaced. I have letters from almost every member of the official opposition saying "Look, we were really glad that Beaverton got this money for that, but you can't get any money"—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: But I do from your mayors, my dear friend from Lanark—many from your mayors.

There is no shortage of bridges and roads that need to be replaced. The increase in the roads and transportation budget is 400%. I have great empathy for my friends from the north; when I was mayor of Winnipeg, I used to work with the mayors of Dryden, Kenora, Thunder Bay and the Soo to try and get that northern trade route extended. I just heard them criticize this government; we're spending four or five times more than any other government on northern highways. We have more twinning projects going on on the Trans-Canada Highway and the 11 and 17 than there ever has been in my lifetime.

The problem is, in the old days, that used to be a 50-50 cost-sharing agreement with the federal government. We built the Trans-Canada Highway, and you notice, Madam Speaker, when you get to the Manitoba border it's a pretty nice highway. It's double-lane all the way to Calgary. Go back in the history books and find out how that was funded. It wasn't funded 90% by the province of Manitoba and 10% by the federal government, because on our side of the border, 92% of that is paid for by the people of Ontario through their taxes, way beyond the tax base of the north.

We should be proud of that. I always say this: We have a banking industry here in Toronto, in my constituency. The reason we have that is because northern communities and my uncles in Sudbury opened up mining in the north. If it had not been for mining, there would not be banking in Toronto. If there had not been banking in Toronto and we didn't have Canadian bankers and financiers, we wouldn't have the capital to have opened up the north. We are Ontarians first. You wouldn't have Toronto without the north; you wouldn't have the banks. You probably wouldn't have the mines in the north without the banks, because they'd probably be a pretty skinned-down kind of thing.

We are dependent on each other—rural and urban, suburban and northern—and, quite frankly, there's a spirit of generosity and plenty here. Is it enough? No, but 60% of the tax dollars that we pay in Ontario go to the federal government. Our municipalities and regional and provincial governments exist on 40 cents on the dollar. That 60% is something quite redistributed.

If we had the highest per-capita spending—I'm not even going to get into great detail beyond that, but there were 17 gas plants that were planned.

Interjection: There were five.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: There were 17, and why were there 17? Because this government listened to the experts and the engineers and said, "We needed 17 gas plants." Rather than thinking that those of us who are politicians are smarter than the engineers and the planners, we committed to building them. I'm going to take a wild guess: As has been the habit for 50 years before, no party in power ever said to those people, "Don't build that gas plant." In fact, I can't find once in 50 years where we told the engineers not to build that gas plant, to not put those pipes there. We just don't do that. We listened to it.

I'm going to take a wild guess that if you were over here and the experts came to you—especially when we're on the verge of brownouts; we've got places like Kitchener-Waterloo that have regions that don't have enough energy right now—you would have done the same thing. Whether it was the Red Hill highway or the 407, I could go back through every government that got elected and cancelled a project. We're not cancelling them; we're relocating them because we need the energy capacity. We all agreed in an election that we would relocate them, and we all understood that there would be a cost to that.

My friend from Leeds-Grenville was a mayor; he was a very good mayor. He knows, with the cost of contracts, that if you get elected, if you want to cancel something, it's going to cost you money. This shock and awe that somehow we didn't know there was going to be a price to those commitments that we made democratically—because this place always trumps the bureaucrats, and this place always has to represent people.

When people stand up and say, "We want you to change a decision. We want you to do something differently"—if we had any kind of humility at all, whether it was a freeway in Hamilton that one party cancelled, whether it was a subway that was filled in by another, whether it was a hospital that was committed to that was closed by another government—I take that with a grain of salt, because there are a lot of born-again virgins here all of a sudden, Madam Speaker. No one ever remembered how it happened—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I just ask the member to withdraw—unparliamentary.

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Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm sorry, Madam Speaker. I withdraw that comment. My attempt at humour failed.

I will tell you as a Canadian that I'm incredibly proud of this government. I'm incredibly proud of the legacy of governments past. We continue to meet the challenges of having to double our university size, to meet an aging population and to build a health care system.

We're still spending less on services than any other government in Canada, and we're still exporting our tax dollars. That's quite a powerful feat of the people of Ontario. The current members of this Legislature and those past should be pretty proud of that. That's a really remarkable accomplishment.

I think all Canadians in this country are in a better place, whether you live in the north, the city or rural, because of Ontario. We've been the best and biggest advocates for this country and this Confederation. We've put our money where our mouth is now for almost 150 years.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today and speak on the government's interim supply motion, which, for those of you who are just tuning in at home, is an opportunity to focus on the financial management—or what I would like to say mismanagement—of the McGuinty-

Wynne government. Stay tuned; it's something not to be missed.

This is in contrast to how the new Premier and her government have so far squandered probably every opportunity they've had to make a real attempt to deal with Ontario's financial plight and put the province back on the road to recovery. One could say that this government has never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity.

Instead, what we hear is a commitment to continue the same Dalton McGuinty legacy, the same stale ideas that have mired Ontario in record debt and continue to threaten our collective prosperity, despite what the previous members have said. In the year before the Liberals took office, Ontario's debt was \$132.6 billion. Most of us were horrified by that number. However, the Liberals seem to be saying, "If you think it's bad now, wait till we get through with it." Well, they've lived up to that.

During the Liberal government's reign here, the last nine years, the debt has ballooned almost 78% to \$235.6 billion. If the current trend continues, by the end of the decade, it will balloon to over \$550 billion. None of that is to be taken lightly. That is a lot of numbers that I have put out there. It's a dire forecast presented last year by the government's own hand-picked economist, Don Drummond. But they continue not to listen, and they do not seem to get the crisis that Ontario is in.

We're still waiting for some comprehensive plan to come forward. We're having lots of conversations, though—lots of conversations. We've been urging the government for over a year and a half to legislate a two-year public sector wage freeze. This isn't new. We've been saying it repeatedly. So when they say that we don't have ideas, we have been saying it a lot. There's no doubt they would have heard it. I guess you can turn a deaf ear. It's not itself a solution, but it's a huge step. We've seen the government trying to go after low-hanging fruit, instead of being prepared for the bold and tough decisions which the situation demands.

You have to lead by leadership because there are 600,000 people who are unemployed and are trying to find a job. These aren't just numbers; these are real people. We as a government need to help them get a job. They're not looking for a handout. They want to contribute back to their province and to their communities. They're looking for the government to create this atmosphere, conditions where good-paying jobs will be created by the private sector.

They're looking for the government to do something about the College of Trades. I hear it every weekend in my riding. The College of Trades is enforcing outdated apprenticeship ratios. They're preventing young people, not just my riding but from all across Ontario—and especially northern Ontario needs more tradespeople. They're asking us to send them more young people. We have to change the outdated apprenticeship ratios to one-to-one. We need to change it—again, an idea we keep giving this government, and they don't want to deal with it.

They want to talk a lot about employment for youth, but they don't actually do anything to do that. In my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, and the riding of Peterborough, side by side, which now hosts the new Minister of Rural Affairs, we have higher unemployment than the provincial average. Yet, instead of doing something to create opportunities in rural Ontario, in our area especially, as I mentioned, the government charged ahead and continues to want to eliminate the successful Slots at Racetracks Program—in typical Liberal fashion, done without consultation on who would be directly impacted, knowing what tracks would or wouldn't still be open, affecting tens of thousands of people, but they didn't consult. It was done to eliminate the competition for the OLG and pave the way for the government's plan to build 29 new casinos across the province, whether those communities want them or not.

The loss of horse racing in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, the neighbouring riding of Peterborough and many ridings throughout urban and rural Ontario is disastrous. We had some of the most successful breeders in North America. We have farmers who support the industry through the growing of hay. We have trainers, grooming people, equipment, feed suppliers—the chain goes down of the economic stimulus. We have veterinarians whose practices are almost entirely dedicated to the industry.

But on March 30, Kawartha Downs is going to have its final race and we could lose up to 800 full- and part-time jobs there, which could have been there with a successful horse racing industry. But again, government policy has decimated that, decimated those people's opportunities. These people paid their taxes. They contributed to their communities. They want to work. They took pride in their work. So for them to transition to a new career, some of them in the later stages of their working lives, is difficult for them. They don't want to be on the government's payroll of the unemployed. It's a human tragedy, but again we keep prodding this.

So I'll say, what about the horses? It's pretty hard for an unemployed racehorse to get good work, and there are some difficult decisions that are going to have to be made out there and thousands of horses are going to have a fate that we don't like to talk about but is the reality out there.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Ten thousand.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes. Over 10,000 for sure will be affected, probably euthanized. So it is disgraceful.

I believe a lot of people were given false hope by the now minister from the Peterborough area that he would be a knight. He thought he had a solution last summer that would save them. Now we see that he's toeing the party line and our racetrack is closing in just but a couple of weeks. So I hope this does not go unnoticed in the next election coming forward.

Interjection: Pass the word.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes. This government's legacy of ill-conceived initiatives—unprecedented. That's one example that I've taken a lot of time about today, but is one that continues to be a top issue in the riding.

We can go on about health care and the need for health care. As my colleague from Dufferin-Caledon said, the people who aren't getting health care, the children who aren't getting their mental health needs addressed, the elderly who aren't getting their home care, who aren't accessing long-term-care homes or the care that they need appropriately are the true face of what's happening when you don't have a government that is responsible fiscally, getting its house in order. Those are the people who are suffering, and if you don't think people are suffering out there, where have you been? Read the headlines. Even listen to a little bit of what we say over here.

But it's okay to spend \$2 billion, I think, on eHealth for a system that we don't have a registry on. Ornge is going on and on. And the power plants—how can we go on to say more about the power plants? We're looking at over \$1 billion already. Could that money not have been better spent? Absolutely. Could they have done their policies differently? Absolutely.

First of all, you just ask the communities about the power plants. Ask communities about the wind turbines. Ask communities about their racetracks. A few examples, but talking about billions of dollars that's wasted, and it's our money. People are upset, and they should be upset. This government cares more about those bureaucracies, those LHINs, those CCACs, than putting front-line health care workers out in the communities and helping our people. You know, when they have to travel miles and miles for blood tests in our rural communities—my colleague from the north has spoken. We have similar issues in rural Ontario. Health care isn't at the door.

Mr. Steve Clark: Doctors and nurses.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes. Doctor shortages exist. Family health teams—there's more out there. But certainly you can talk to them about bureaucracy that does not work in rural Ontario.

Madam Speaker, I could go on and on, but I think the government probably is getting the general idea that I don't like the way they spend their money, most of my residents in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock don't like the way they spend their money, and we will not be supporting this supply motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure to speak to this supply motion. I want to first start by taking a little bit of a different tack with this. We've been presented with, in your order papers today, a list of expenditures that are included in this supply motion. I want to draw attention to the coalition member from Beaches-East York when he was speaking earlier today. He said it would be financially irresponsible—

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Mr. Michael Prue: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: If I'm being referred to, I belong to no coalition. I take umbrage at that comment and ask that he be forced to withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw—the NDP member for Beaches-East York, who's also, I think we can all see, part of the coalition that's happening in this House.

Anyway, he said it was financially irresponsible not to support this supply motion. He said that we have no choice; we must support this supply motion. I really take a little bit of umbrage with the idea that we don't have choices in this Legislature.

But I do want to say this: We never got or had an opportunity to scrutinize these expenses, of course, because prorogation stopped the estimates committee, stopped the ability of this House to scrutinize proposed expenditures of this government. Now we're faced with a supply motion without any scrutiny of what those expenditures are. So I've been looking through and starting to scrutinize these expenditures that are proposed over the next seven months. Under the Ministry of the Environment, they have a department here—a category 1108: waste. They're going to spend \$64 million wastefully, I think, under the Ministry of the Environment. That's what they're proposing: \$64 million in waste.

There's also \$27 million for the cabinet office for the next seven months. Did we know that? Twenty-seven million dollars for the Cabinet Office. This is all just on page 3 of today's order papers. The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services: \$5 million for agencies, boards and commissions. Well, which agencies, boards and commissions are we giving \$5 million to?

Here's one on page 5 for the Office of the Premier: \$2.6 million in the next seven months for the Office of the Premier. Truly, this is how scandals and waste happen: when the Legislature is prevented from providing scrutiny over government spending, things such as the gas plants, Ornge, eHealth and OLG. All these things have happened because the Legislature was not privy to or permitted to see what truly was going on with government spending, and they're doing it again. This is the result of prorogation. It's a consequence of prorogation that we are being asked to just write the blank cheque for this government and give them the authority to spend willy-nilly, however they want, and the supporting party here to my left are going to continue to support it.

I truly hope that everybody, and maybe the members over on the government side—I know some of their ministers don't like to read before they endorse things, but maybe they want to read today's order paper as well. Oh, here's another one: \$6.8 million in political contribution tax credits. Where is this money going and how is it being spent? Is it being spent wisely or is it just being wasted once again?

We have seen the consequences of a government that disrespects people, that disrespects this Legislature in not being transparent and not being accountable. We've seen it with the fiasco with the gas plants. That's going on in our committees right now. Who knows how many real dollars have been wasted there, how many hundreds of millions of dollars? And we're still trying to dig through there and find out what the reality is, just how much waste has gone on there.

There have been so many other scandals with this government. I think one of the biggest ones has just happened as well with Bill 119. How much money is coming in under Bill 119 for this needless, useless new insurance premium that is being placed on our independent contractors in this province? We have no idea. We're being kept in the dark about just what the financial position is.

So I'm not going to support or vote for a supply motion that is the result of—and I'll say purposely keeping the Legislative Assembly ignorant of the financial goings-on of this province. That's what has gone on with this government: Keep everybody from being aware of their actions and their activities. It would be financially irresponsible, in my view, to do anything but vote down this supply motion. If this government truly wants to be accountable, let's roll things back a little bit here and say, "Yeah, we're going to bring our spending estimates to a committee forthwith, right away, and get things scrutinized by the members of this assembly."

I've got to say about these gas plants—because we don't know just where the end is going to be on that, but we do know that, in addition to everything else, they're transferring over OPG property, public assets, to TransCanada Energy for that relocated gas plant in my riding at Bath. I just want to put on the record one more time that they've relocated this gas plant from Oakville—somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$600 million or \$800 million in cost—right beside an existing 2,000-megawatt generating station in Bath that operates at about 5% of its capacity—5% of its capacity. A 2,000-megawatt generating station, gas-fired, is already owned by the public, by OPG. It sits in my riding, and they're going to build another brand-new one, half the size, right beside it. They're giving the land to TransCanada. Just think of this: It's going to cost about \$1.3 billion, I think, for that new plant to be built right beside an existing one that doesn't ever get turned on. Just what would be the benefit? Here we're going to spend \$1.3 billion and get for it absolutely zero.

Interjection: Squat.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Squat, nothing—\$1.3 billion, because we've already got the generating station right

there and it doesn't get turned on right now. Can you imagine if you took that \$1.3 billion and put it into health care, put it into people with developmental disabilities, put it into our social safety nets? There, it could actually provide a benefit for the people of this province, a tangible benefit that would make this province better. Instead, we're just going to build a gas-fired generating station that in all likelihood will never get turned on, just like the one that it's going to be built beside that never gets turned out.

I have to say—and I mentioned this in the House yesterday—that on my way down to Toronto on the weekend, I drove by another abandoned OPG-owned generating station at Wesleyville, 1,700 acres of prime waterfront property—Lake Ontario at Bowmanville—that is owned by OPG and that has a generating station that was constructed but mothballed there, that much closer to the demand for new power, but this government doesn't know anything when it comes to being financially responsible—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number one, interim supply. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

Pursuant to standing order 28(h), the request has been made to vote on the interim supply motion in deferred votes on Wednesday, March 20.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Madam Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has moved adjournment of the House. All those in favour? Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until 9 a.m. on Wednesday.

The House adjourned at 1731.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliot, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
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Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 20 March 2013

Mercredi 20 mars 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 20 March 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 20 mars 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Let us pray.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NON-PROFIT HOUSING
CO-OPERATIVES STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LES COOPÉRATIVES DE LOGEMENT
SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 6, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 14, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés coopératives et la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne les coopératives de logement sans but lucratif et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Pembroke–Nipissing—do I have it right?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Good enough for me. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

That's quite a load my colleague is bringing in here—she must be signing a lot of letters on my behalf.

Speaker, before the break the other day, I finished up the debate here. So if I try to remember where I left off, that would be impossible. But I want to welcome folks from the co-operative housing association—Harvey Cooper and others. They're faithful people. You know, I was looking out there while the prayer was going on and I thought, "Oh, you know, they're not going to come to see the last eight minutes of my speech." I cannot tell you how overjoyed I was when I saw them coming up there and taking their seats in the gallery. I thought, "They have not abandoned me."

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They have not abandoned me. And, let me tell you, the folks here in the Legislature have not abandoned you either.

Again, I want to talk about what a great job my colleague from the great riding of Leeds–Grenville—it's not the greatest riding. It's up there. It's not near as good as Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, but it is a good riding. I want to thank him for the great work he's done on this.

Basically what the bill amounts to is it gives the opportunity to take these disputes between landlords and tenants to the Landlord and Tenant Board, as opposed to running them through the courts. Anybody who has ever been in the court system, in a litigative situation—my goodness gracious, let me tell you, it's not cheap. And many times it's not productive. I'm not here to castigate lawyers by any means, Mr. Speaker, but if the way you earn your money is by the amount of time you spend in a courtroom, there's a great incentive to spend a lot of time in a courtroom and have those billing hours go up.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I've been on the paying side of that, too, so I do—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: You've got some experience there with that?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, yes, I have. A thank you to the member from Halton.

Again, when I was in this chamber last and we were talking about this bill, there was a whole lot less talk about the actual bill, the co-operative housing issue, which is very specific to a narrow sector, and that is co-operatively owned housing, which is not the same as affordable housing, not the same as regular rental housing where you have an agreement with the landlord or a large corporation that owns an amount of properties. These are co-operative corporations, so it's a unique niche in the market, and this bill was specifically designed to help that sector deal with disputes between the two parties. If you're in the rental business, you've got landlords and you've got tenants; and we've got a better way, we believe, of dealing with that.

Is the bill perfect? By no means. I mean, right off the bat you know it was introduced by a Liberal government; there's got to be problems. It's impossible for them not to have something in a bill that will by design, I believe, create problems, because this is the way they operate.

The other thing I found, Mr. Speaker, was that there was a tremendous amount of latitude given to the speakers the other day about what they were actually speaking about, and my colleague the Attorney General—he was here, I believe—I'm sure couldn't believe that people were actually talking about this bill because that really wasn't part of the conversation.

Interestingly enough, one of the topics of the day is, of course, scandals. What people were talking about most when they were going through the debate—the new transportation minister talked mostly about affordable housing, and the members from the New Democrats talked almost exclusively about affordable housing. So they weren't talking about the bill at all, I'm sure much to the chagrin of the folks in the gallery. But the bill itself is something that I think we're all pretty much in agreement on.

But I want to talk about affordable housing for a moment, Mr. Speaker.

Miss Monique Taylor: Oh, really? Tell us all about it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to the member from Hamilton Mountain, only from the point of view that there always seems to be the position by many members of this Legislature that we don't put enough money into affordable housing, both at the provincial and the federal levels.

I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, how much more money could we have put into affordable housing if we didn't have the eHealth scandal? A billion—one billion. Okay, somebody keep that clock ticking here.

How much more could we have put into affordable housing without this hydro plant scandal that is getting bigger, broader and deeper by the day? We found out yesterday at committee that folks from the OPA are completely contradicting the government. Even the secretary of cabinet is contradicting what the government has been saying, what ministers have said in this House—and they have refused to withdraw their statements in this House.

So I believe this is only going to get deeper and deeper and deeper, until some member of the government, preferably the Premier, takes the responsibility and says, "Enough is enough. We're going to have to accept that we are to blame." The Liberal government, the Liberal Party, the Liberal ministers, the Liberal members, the Liberal members whose seats were saved—those are the ones that are going to have to accept the blame for costing the people of Ontario—now we know—not \$40 million, not \$230 million, but hundreds and hundreds of millions. Oakville alone is in the \$600-million-and-some range.

JoAnne Butler, vice-president of the OPA, basically just said that what the minister has been saying is absolutely wrong: He has not been disclosing the facts; he has not been accurate in what he has been saying. So affordable housing: I say to the Attorney General, how much could we have put into affordable housing without these scandals? And I haven't touched on some of the other scandals that have been—

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Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Which ones would those be?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, give me some help here, I say to the member of Halton. There are so many that I haven't got them tracked properly. Should we file them alphabetically, or should we file them on the basis of how many hundreds of millions of dollars they have cost? On

a declining scale or rising? Highest to lowest or lowest to highest? How should we file them? Because at this point, it's in the billions and billions and billions of dollars. Do you remember Carl Sagan? You know, billions and billions of stars. Well, in Ontario, it's billions and billions of dollars that have been wasted, to the chagrin of the taxpayer, who has to continue to pay for this, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, I'm done? Oh my goodness. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker? Unanimous consent for 10 more minutes for the member from—

Hon. John Gerretsen: No. Never.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Denied.

The member from Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To get back to the bill for a second, the non-profit co-op housing bill before us—which, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, should have been passed months ago, if not years ago. Unfortunately, but for prorogation, it would have been, so we're dealing with it again.

All I can say is, let's speedily get this done. We have a housing crisis. We have 70,000-odd families waiting 10 to 12 years in the GTA, and over 150,000 in Ontario waiting for affordable housing. The housing co-op movement is one of the pieces of the puzzle to answer that. We need to do everything possible—and a lot more than this bill, might I say—to make it possible to get co-ops up, running and then running well in this province.

We have unfortunately gotten out of the housing business in this province a long time ago. We have the worst record in Canada for investment in affordable housing per capita. This is a small thing, but it's a necessary thing. It's something that our friends here, who keep coming back again and again and again—their attendance record is probably better than some of our colleagues in the House. Surely to goodness we can do this simple, simple move, and that is to pass this bill as smoothly as possible. I mean, my goodness, they're not asking for much. They're just asking for what should almost be a regulatory change so that their poor housing co-ops can get on with it.

By the way, I hope this is the first start to a housing program coming from across the aisle, because we haven't seen, really, such a thing. A housing strategy would be nice, Mr. Speaker. Building affordable housing: even better. But at least let's have a template; let's have a plan. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Attorney General?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker, and let me just say that, obviously, we totally support this initiative, and it probably should have happened about eight years ago, when I was Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Harvey Cooper and the co-op movement talked to me about this. But at that point in

time, I think there was one party in the House that couldn't quite agree to have this passed quickly at that time. They're the party sitting opposite me at this point in time. So at least they're on the right track in supporting this initiative.

You know, I listened to the member from Renfrew talk about waste in government. When I first got here in 1995, I can remember two things very vividly. One of them was the fact that Mike Harris cut social services to the people of this province by 22% at that point in time. The other thing he did—that kind of went unnoticed, because the 22% cut in welfare was a lot bigger of a story—is that he cut down every housing project that was on the books at that point in time and that was ready to go.

I know in my own community, there were at least three or four non-profit housing projects, including one co-op project, that were basically just scrapped, and the millions of dollars that were wasted at that point in time because plans had been done, property had been purchased—some of these projects were well under way etc., but the Conservative government of the day felt, “No, we do not need affordable housing.” That is a fact, and that is a reality.

So I am very pleased that, through the initiatives of the member from Leeds–Grenville—for whom I've got a lot of respect. We were both mayors at the same time back in the 1980s; I was old already at that point in time, and he the youngest mayor in Canada at the time. I think he was 22 years old, was an unemployed cartoonist at the time when he won in Brockville etc. I'm glad, through his initiative, that at least the Conservative Party is starting to go back a little bit to the party of Bill Davis and believes in affordable housing. I would like to see that same kind of positive attitude continue with respect to other housing programs that will be coming forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: It's always my pleasure to stand and rise to this discussion and to see Harvey Cooper and his group here once again. I know that they've been working on this for quite some time. I believe they've been working on this initiative for 10 years. As my colleague said previous to me, we could have had this taken care of and already lessened the load on these kind folks from having to attend here and spend more of their time, if we hadn't prorogued. We would already be past this and on to other business of the province. But to say the least, we are still here. You know, it's something that we should just be moving on.

We know that all sides of the House are supporting this; we should be getting it through. We should be making sure that co-ops are sustainable in our ridings, in our hometowns, because they provide an excellent service. They make sure that we have a good community base and that those communities are working together. You see the pride in their neighbourhoods, you see the pride in their households as they work together to make sure that they are providing a safe environment for their children and families.

You know, all they're asking for is to be allowed the same venue as all other landlords and tenants are through this province, and that's to not be in the court system but to be able to be in front of the Landlord and Tenant Board. It's cost-efficient, it's time-efficient, and it's a fairer process that we're all in favour of here.

So I would like to see this bill get on. Not that I wouldn't like to see Harvey and his group here all the time, because they're always a great face to see in the House, but I'm sure they have bigger and better things to do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his presentation. As he mentioned in his presentation, he had started this some time back. I don't recall exactly what he said then, so I was listening to the part that he spoke to today and very eloquently pointing out that the purpose of the bill is very productive. I think we would all recognize that in co-op housing it's very important that we find a way to deal with the challenges they face within the housing unit, being that the people who are living in the housing unit are also the owners of the housing unit. So it's not only appropriate to do it in front of the landlord and tenant protection board, but to not put it in court. To be fighting oneself in court has never been very productive, and it sure isn't for that, either. So I think the purpose of this bill has great merit: to make sure that we can make the issues that they have more expeditiously.

I do want to point out—and it isn't in the bill—that we need the ability to put these through the landlord and tenant protection board in an expedient way. Because the things I hear from all the people who use that board—I hear that it takes too long, that we can't get things through that. So if we add more to it, then obviously we have to make sure that the capabilities of the board are increased so we don't see it slowing everything else down in the province, that in fact we can make the system work better, not drag it down to not getting anybody's job done. We hope that will be done, that the government will see fit to do that.

I want to thank, again, our member from Nipissing–Pembroke for explaining what is in it and what needs to be done. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Parkdale–High Park, the Attorney General, the member from Hamilton Mountain and the member from Oxford for their comments.

0920

One of the things I didn't get a chance to talk about, and one of the things we have some concern about, is waiving the fee for the application. The member from Oxford talked specifically about if we make this more accessible, the likelihood is that you're going to have more people looking for access to it. Waiving the fee will actually encourage people to apply, and because they

don't have to put any money up front, perhaps they might apply based on a case they know they can't win. The current situation, where if you win, if you're successful, then you recoup your fees makes more sense, because it will discourage frivolous cases from being brought forward to the board. And the board is going to be challenged, because it is going to have more cases coming to it as a result of the changes.

But again I do want to say, and I want to comment to the Attorney General, who wanted to go back to the 1990s: I'll tell you, folks, people remember the 1990s. They remember the government before Mike Rae that set the table for the mess—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Bob Rae.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —Bob Rae—the David Peterson government that set the table for the mess. That was the worst government in the history of Canada—the David Peterson government. It made such a mess of it that the Rae government was faced with a terrible mess and they made it greater. But I'll tell you, in 1995 there came along a person, Mike Harris, who said, "This has to be fixed. Ontario cannot continue on this trail, cannot continue on this path." He had the guts and the intestinal fortitude to make the tough decisions. This government over there does not have any guts. They will sidle up to anybody who's going to keep them in power. That is what is going to be the downfall of this province financially—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —the failure of this government to stand up and take tough decisions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to remind the member from Renfrew that when I say "thank you" he's done, and he also sits down when I stand up. Thank you. That won't happen again. Thank you.

Further debate? The member from Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: As always, it's an honour to rise and speak on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Davenport. I would like to extend to everybody a happy first day of spring, and remember that it's the equinox, which is a day of perfection—half darkness, half light—full balance, which I think we perhaps don't see enough of here in this Parliament. Certainly in recent years, you know, the forces of darkness have been too strong, and we've seen those forces cutting taxes, cutting our programs and so forth, and I think we need to restore some balance here.

For viewers at home, I'm here to speak to Bill 14, the Non-profit Housing Co-operatives Statute Law Amendment Act. For members in the gallery today, I'll tell you a little bit about that act so you know what we're discussing here today.

Bill 14 will make the co-op housing sector dispute process a little bit fairer and a little bit more affordable for co-ops and tenants. Bill 14 amends the Residential Tenancies Act and the Co-operative Corporations Act to move certain co-op tenant disputes like arrears, late rent payments and wilful damage away from the courts and to

the Landlord and Tenant Board. Disputes that are not provided for under the Residential Tenancies Act—for example, violations of no-pet provisions, failure to fulfill co-op duties or member disputes with the provider over charges or maintenance—will continue to go through the courts, and there would be no appeal of decisions made by co-op boards unless expressly permitted in co-op bylaws.

Bill 14, which, as my colleague has pointed out was originally introduced as Bill 65 in the last Legislature, includes one substantive addition: an amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act that would authorize the Landlord and Tenant Board to waive or defer fees it charges to low-income Ontarians, as is currently allowed in other courts and tribunals.

Speaker, New Democrats continue to welcome this bill and this new amendment that will provide tenants with more affordable access to the Landlord and Tenant Board. But we also want to be clear that a lot more needs to be done to protect tenants' rights and their access to justice, and a lot more needs to be done to actually address the housing crisis in our province.

This bill hits close to home for me for many reasons. In the past I've had the good fortune to live in co-operative housing, and I feel extraordinarily lucky that I have a parent who, after many years on the waiting list, is in co-operative housing.

I was having a conversation in the lobby with the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex. He asked me how it actually works in co-operative housing; are they well managed? I said my experience has been incredible. Tenants in co-operative housing take responsibility for their shared living experience. I certainly paid market rent when I was there, as my mom does as well. But that living arrangement provides them vibrant living and a place where people, in my experience, are very, very fortunate to live.

Speaker, this bill is also close to my heart, though, because it's part of a larger discussion that's long overdue. It has been mentioned here, but unfortunately, we have not seen enough action. That is the issue of increased cost of living in Ontario and the lack of affordable housing options for too many Ontario families. As we know, this lack of affordable housing connects to and compounds other stresses and inequalities that too many families face every day in Ontario.

Before I had this job, I worked for many years in some of the most difficult shelters, I would say, in this city. I remember, as I was doing social work school, going to see tent city down by the waterfront. I remember meeting Cathy Crowe, who's a street nurse, and listening to her words about what she called, in 2001, a national disaster on homelessness. Speaker, it strikes me that that crisis has not gone away. Unfortunately, it's something that we've gotten all too used to in this city, but it's something that must be addressed, and it has to be addressed here in this Legislature.

In our city of Toronto, we have shelters that are running at full capacity. People are again choosing to sleep

outside because they would rather be outside than be in shelters, which don't feel safe to people, which are struggling to deal with bedbug issues and a lot of other issues. At the end of the day shelters are not a replacement for affordable housing.

I've seen the housing crisis up front in the most crude and upsetting ways for very, very low-income people. But I've also seen it for many of my constituents who might not appear to be struggling. They are seniors. They are students. They are everyday working folks. For those folks, life is becoming more uncertain, more expensive, more stressful and more precarious.

The recent report card from Ontario's Campaign 2000 stated that, on average, Ontario's highest-income earners make 12½ times more than the lowest-income earners in Ontario. This points to a fact that we know, which is that income inequality has grown worse for this generation. For low-income children and families, the hope and stability that their parents experienced they will not experience.

Housing in Ontario is becoming less and less affordable for low- and modest-income Ontarians. A recent report called *Falling Behind* found that Ontario has the highest cost of housing in any province. In 2009, Ontario spent \$64 per capita on affordable housing, which is only half of the average of other Canadian provinces. Meanwhile, taking the necessary steps to build secure affordable housing, to make sure people can put food on the table, to reduce poverty—these issues unfortunately have taken a back seat in Ontario to other political dramas right here in this building. Meanwhile, life continues to grow more difficult for the majority of people in Ontario.

In this province, waiting lists for social housing have swelled to over 157,000 households. This is a 26% increase since 2007. One in five renters pay more than 50% of their income on rent in Ontario, which we know puts them at risk of homelessness. With a growing number of jobs that are contract jobs, that are part-time, that are short-term or casual, with a minimum wage that has not kept up with inflation, that is not livable, there are few certainties that rent money will be there for renters the following month.

Just last month, I was at the release of the United Way report on precarious employment and household well-being, and I had a chance to speak to folks there. The findings from that report are absolutely shocking. Barely half of the people in the greater Toronto area are in permanent full-time jobs. Let me say that again: Half of the people in the GTA have secure jobs. They don't have jobs that are full-time, that provide benefits or have any degree of employment security. Precarious employment has increased by nearly 50% in the last 20 years, and it continues to do so.

0930

Maybe some of our colleagues in this Legislature think that's a good idea, but I believe that this lack of stability and security is taking a toll on people's mental health. It's taking a toll on our families, on our communities, on our social cohesion, on our productivity and on

the well-being of our province. Speaker, I would argue that this is very real and that the effects are well documented. Clearly, the cost of shelter in Ontario is increasing this instability. This instability is decreasing people's ability to pay the rent and to feed their kids.

Early in the month, the United Nations put out a report on the right to food. It noted that the increased cost of housing is impeding the ability of people on social assistance to access a well-balanced, healthy diet. I think it should be obvious that food is vital for children and for adults. It's vital for children to learn and grow, and for people to lead healthy, productive lives. Yet in this province of Ontario, food bank use has increased by 31% between 2008 and 2012. I think it's long overdue that we start to talk about food security and about the growing food bank numbers in Ontario.

I think that the numbers don't actually do it justice. I would encourage members of this Legislature to actually go down to a food bank and see what is going on there. If you've ever volunteered in a food bank or worked in a low-income community and you've seen what it's like to line up at a food bank and to wait in line and to have your neighbours in your community see you asking for a food handout in this wealthy city, you would know that the experience of getting food at a food bank is not empowering. In fact, it's dehumanizing in many ways. Yet this is the only way that people in this province who care are able to give back, it seems, because we've had a government that has abandoned the social contract to actually care for people who are struggling.

I really wish that people could put a face to this issue, because I think the numbers don't do it justice. Food banks have become an institution in this city and in this province, and they make absolutely no sense. I would much rather, instead of taking the produce that our grocery stores don't want to sell or can't sell and then having the thousands and thousands of volunteer hours to pick up that food and bring it to a food bank and then distribute it, and all the fundraising money that goes to that—heck, I'd rather just give that money out to people and let them make a choice about what they wanted to eat instead of having to go through cans to check expiry dates and check for dents. But in fact, Speaker, that's the job of this province, the job of all of us: to make sure that we have enough to pay the bills. I think that the state of food insecurity and the growing food bank use in this province is a shame. In fact, it has let this government off the hook.

This is all the reality to the background as we try to pass Bill 14, and it's a little frustrating to be here speaking about this bill again, because we've seen this bill introduced before, as Bill 65, before the Liberal government prorogued the Legislature. And while we appreciate the small amendment that this government made to the bill to increase accessibility to the Landlord and Tenant Board, we all know that this bill does not go far enough. It doesn't cover enough or address the root causes of the issues that Ontarians face every day.

We have not seen this government make affordability or affordable housing a priority. This bill is fine. It will

pass. It will go to committee. New Democrats will work there to ensure that it's fair and it's as strong as possible, given the limited scope that this government has provided to address affordable housing.

But this government does need to show more. It needs to show a real commitment to Ontario families, and it needs to start taking responsibility for its failure to act over the past decade, its failure to make life more secure and more affordable for Ontarians.

Like the Attorney General, I remember what that meant when the government previous to the Liberal government cut social assistance benefits by 22%. But it has been 15 years since then, and there has been plenty of time to make sure that people can keep food on the table. This bill is another example of how slowly this government has been moving on some of the most critical issues that we face.

Speaker, for the last nine years, since 2004, the co-operative housing sector has been lobbying the provincial government to move co-op evictions out of the courts and to use the existing infrastructure of the tribunal system used by other non-profit housing providers and private landlords. A decade later, it's time to move this forward. Let's not forget that in 2009 this government signed an all-party commitment, through the Poverty Reduction Act, to reduce poverty in Ontario, because this act has stalled, this plan has stalled and it's time to get it moving.

There are 600,000 people without work in this province, and it's time that this government do something to support those folks. It has taken 10 years just to produce a report on social assistance reform, but unfortunately a shelved report will not pay the rent or feed the kids in Ontario. It's time for this government to move forward with social assistance reform. Time is wasting. People's lives are deteriorating while they wait. We need action today to implement the best recommendations of the social assistance review.

We all know that the mess of complicated rules for social assistance recipients is well documented now, and it's time for the Premier to make these changes to allow Ontarians to put food on the table. We've put forward a piece of that, which is to start by allowing social assistance recipients who are working to keep \$200 of their earnings; don't claw that back. It's a proposal that all parties have agreed to, yet it's disappointing to see the government sit on their hands. Why can't we push that forward today? My understanding is that it's a regulation change. It could happen; it could have happened weeks ago, months ago; it could have happened 10 years ago. I hope that the Premier will take our lead, will work with us on the budget to deliver relief to Ontario families.

But to be honest, Speaker, the record of this government has been disappointing at best. In Toronto, this Premier signed off on an agreement to sell 65 housing units of public housing, and while some said this was prudent, this is not a long-term solution. Selling off capital assets to pay for repairs is not a long-term solution, and it speaks to the real crisis in this province.

Speaker, we've put forward many proposals, as New Democrats, that we would like to see, proposals that

would protect low-income tenants. We proposed ways to make it easier for tenants to have their concerns heard at the Landlord and Tenant Board; for example, increasing the time limit for tenant complaints to the Landlord and Tenant Board to two years after the alleged conduct. That would match the time limitation for landlords. There needs to be a discussion of other ways to better protect tenants through strengthening rent control.

Our party advocates for an inclusionary housing policy in this province that would require developers to ensure a small percentage of affordable housing units in new developments. My colleague from Parkdale-High Park has been a tireless advocate on this issue, pushing this issue to the forefront of our discussions in this Legislature. This government, however, has failed to act. It has failed to put in place inclusionary zoning policies that would allow municipalities to require developers to include a minimum number of affordable housing units in new developments. For those who remain reluctant to spend a dime to build affordable housing, this is a cost-free way to build housing that would support thousands of people in this province. Speaker, there are a growing number of municipalities that see inclusionary zoning housing as a key planning tool to generate more affordable housing and more affordable neighbourhoods.

New Democrats have also proposed a simple amendment to the Planning Act that would ensure that section 37 money would actually support affordable housing growth. This would also lead to the creation of more new housing co-ops, in addition to other forms of more affordable housing. We know that inclusionary housing won't replace direct housing investment from the province, but it will be an important new tool to help Ontarians find more affordable homes and to keep them. We do, however, need direct housing investment, because affordable housing remains the biggest challenge for many people in this province. The long affordable housing wait-lists and the long lines at food banks are the most crude evidence of this big affordability gap.

Speaker, we also proposed a housing benefit that, properly designed, would help stabilize precariously housed renters and households and would be an effective homeless prevention strategy. The government talked about exploring this benefit—it was something that we prioritized in our 2011 election platform—but this government has taken no visible action to move this forward. Now is the time for the government to step up to the plate and deliver on this benefit.

0940

Finally, we need a strong guiding document to bring all of these achievable ideas together. Ontario needs a housing plan, and needs a housing plan with targets, with timelines and funding for programs. This government promised such a plan three years ago when it launched its long-term affordable housing plan consultations. While the government has put forward a long-term housing plan, it has not set any targets for the creation of affordable housing or any long-term commitment of dollars. Speaker, we need targets, we need timelines and we need

a funding commitment to effectively tackle the housing crisis that our province is facing.

I think that the issue of responsibility is important. I think that this building is too far away, even though it's just blocks, from people who are struggling to pay the rent. It's just blocks from people who are living on the streets. Somehow, members of this Legislature fail to take responsibility to actually secure the right to housing in this city and in this province.

It's sad to say, but there's a lack of leadership on housing issues from this government. In 2009, the Ontario Auditor General highlighted the lack of access to social housing in this province. He noted the lack of ministry staff resources to deliver housing programs, and he noted the lack of proper asset management. He also noted the lack of a provincial strategy to ensure the long-term sustainability of sufficient numbers of well-maintained social housing units.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There are a few sidebars going on. In fact, there are some people who are talking from five or 10 seats away to each other. If you want to have discussions, I'd appreciate it if you'd take it outside. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Speaker, as recently as 2012, the Drummond commission raised the issue and said the province needs to both accept its responsibility to work with municipal housing service managers and affordable housing providers to stabilize funding, and the province also needs to aggressively negotiate to get the federal government back to the table.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to stop here and listen to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me just, first of all, say that I admire anyone who is involved in the social work field. My own daughter has been a social worker with the children's aid society for some 10 years, and now she works in palliative and complex continuing care in the Kingston area. I think social workers do a tremendous amount of good work in this province, and some of them do great work within this Legislature as well.

Now, the member has talked about everything under the sun as far as housing is concerned, and I think he put his finger right on it right at the very end. All successful social housing projects over the last 50 years in this country have been as a result of the co-operation and working together of all three orders of government: local, federal and provincial. As a matter of fact, the last major housing initiative that we had in this province was some five or six years ago, when about \$600 million was put together between both the federal government and the provincial government—all of our tax dollars; we all contributed to it in one way or another—and we did build a significant number of new affordable housing units.

One of the problems with affordable housing is the fact that it means so many different things to so many different people. At the one end, we get money for shel-

ters, we get money for non-profits, we get money for co-ops. At the other end, we get money that helps young couples, for example, buy their first house. To many different people, some of this is regarded as affordable housing, and to some people it isn't regarded as affordable housing. That's one issue that we have out there. There's no question about it that people have a right to decent and affordable housing.

I would just urge the party opposite who have great contact with the federal government to get the federal government re-engaged in the whole issue of affordable housing. If the feds are willing to put up our tax dollars through the federal initiative, we will do so from the provincial side, because we realize it's absolutely necessary that people live in safe, good, clean housing. Everybody should have the right to that in this great country of ours and this great province of ours. All we can do is work together to make this a reality, particularly for the most vulnerable in our society.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'm proud today to speak in favour of this bill. It's a very worthwhile cause. People who need not-for-profit housing—there are unfortunately so many of them in our community, and we have an obligation as a moral society to help these people.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to remind the official opposition that your member is up talking, and five of you are talking in front of him. I'm having trouble hearing, especially the member from Halton. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, again, I support this bill. We, as a party, support this bill. We look forward to working with the Liberals and the NDP to do what's right in this case and help people in Ontario who have a need.

Harvey Cooper, who is here with us today, has been in to my office and spoken to me and explained the problems in more detail than I understood before. So I thank him for that. I understand, I accept and I'm more aware of the breadth and depth of the problem.

We need to be doing more for people who are poor, who are having a difficult time. We need to have more of our assets, our monies, in this province to help these people. We're wasting too much money on things like scandals, other non-priority items—well, a scandal's hardly a priority item—and need to focus on what's important.

The change for this to go to the Landlord and Tenant Board is a very good and worthwhile thing. We are concerned that it might create a very big backlog, which will be bad for tenants and landlords, so we look forward, in committee, to discussing what needs to be done to amend this bill to do the job more effectively. It's not right for tenants or landlords to face big backlogs of time when they deserve timely and just decisions.

We will be supporting it. We look forward to discussing it in committee and making it even better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm happy to stand up and respond to some of the comments that were raised by the member from Davenport.

But first I'd like to address some of the comments that were made by the former Attorney General—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Former?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: No, current Attorney General—I'm sorry—current Attorney General, who I have a tremendous amount of respect for.

But one thing that I cannot stand, when we are sitting in this chamber, when we are engaging in discussion, is jurisdictional politics. I cannot stand it; I have no tolerance for it. I think the people of my riding have no tolerance for governments that try to pass the buck. The fact is that we have a responsibility here in this Legislature, and there is a lot that is within our control, there is a lot that we can do. I don't even like to hear about the federal government, and how we need to lobby the federal government. We need to focus on what we can do right here right now.

So I wanted to speak about some of the issues that were raised by my colleague the member from Davenport and some of the points that I agree with. We've seen it before. We were debating this act or this bill or one that was very close to it, very similar to it, before we prorogued, and all that work was lost. That is a shame. So is the fact that this bill doesn't do anything to help the people in my riding, where we don't have any co-ops.

This bill does not go far enough and it does not address the underlying issues that we see. Underlying issues like: affordable housing; we need to have supports for our municipalities to create more affordable housing, to maintain the existing affordable housing units that they have; we need to have a housing plan with targets and timelines; and in the north, we need affordable hydro; it is not right that people can live in subsidized housing units where they pay \$85 a month but have a \$1,000 hydro bill; and we need affordable food.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Davenport for his comments.

I think that our friends from the co-op sector who are here today are probably encouraged to hear there's going to be support from all three parties for this particular piece of legislation, and I'm sure they're encouraged by that.

Speaker, earlier, in his response to the member from Nipissing—sorry, not Nipissing; Pembroke, I believe—our Attorney General was speaking, and he referenced some decisions that had been made some time ago. I worked in the social housing field for 15 years in Thunder Bay, both the north side of the city and the south side of the city. My geography encompassed—going up to the northeast: Geraldton, Nakina and Aroland and Longlac—quite a wide bit geography. I remember very clearly as well—and all governments make decisions, but I think

the decisions that were made in 1995 were particularly egregious insofar as they disproportionately affected, I think, people who could least afford to be affected in the way that they were as a result of those decisions.

As the AG has said earlier in his remarks, there were projects on the books: contracts had been signed; documents had been prepared; drawings had been prepared. I had a number of non-profit projects in my jurisdiction that would have been coming online that were just simply put to the side, and they didn't go forward. A lot of money was wasted, and a large vacuum, to be fair, was created. We fell behind in a significant way.

0950

Other members don't want to reference the need for support from the federal government, but I can tell you, it is much more difficult, when you're responsible for the money side of things, to get everything done that you want to get done without support from the feds. We saw it four or five years ago when they walked away on the child care money. We've been supporting that with an extra \$63 million a year for four years now; that's \$250 million.

We're concerned with whether or not they're going to stay connected on the social housing field at the end of this agreement. I think 2014 is when it ends. Without their support, it is obviously much more difficult for us, as a government in Ontario, to do as much as we would like to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Davenport has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jonah Schein: It is good to hear the support for this bill. It is an important bill, as we know, and it's good to hear that support from across the House. But we've also heard from most members that we have a crisis of affordable housing that far exceeds the limits of this bill.

I would ask this government, which has had 10 years to do this, to actually introduce some more substantial legislation that would make life more affordable for people, that would deal with some of the concerns experienced by folks in northern communities, as my friend from Kenora—Rainy River was saying, and would make sure that people in this city can afford to live here.

Speaker, I'm thrilled to hear the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills speak in support of this. We need Conservative support in this House for affordable housing. We need Liberal support. We can count on NDP support for affordability issues.

But I think the language of “the needy,” “the others”—we need an understanding in this Legislature that all of us, at some point in our lives, will need support, need help, and that the kind of province that we need to build is one where we can count on each other to help each other out when we are vulnerable. It's not about those other people. It's about our sisters and brothers. It's about our mothers and fathers and our children.

It's mostly a matter of luck whether we're going to be able to make it in this world. But what we do have control of is, in this Legislature, we can introduce policies

that will protect people. We can create affordable housing in Ontario. It would be nice to have the support of the federal government, but this provincial government can and should take the lead. We want to work with this government to make sure that people can afford to live in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on a very important bill, Bill 14, that deals with non-profit housing co-operatives and makes some very important changes.

I will say at the outset that it's about time that we're debating this particular bill. I think we've heard from all three parties how important this particular issue is. We've been hearing from our friends from the co-operative housing sector, who have highlighted to all us members how important this particular—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, it appears that what I just said over there is happening over here. Your speaker is up, we have two lovely discussions going on in front, and I can't hear him. I would suggest we take it outside if you want to have some giggles and things. Thanks.

Go ahead, Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. As I was stating earlier, the co-operative housing sector has done a very good job of highlighting some of the challenges that exist in the current system as it relates to dispute resolution mechanisms within the co-op housing sector. These changes that are being put forward through Bill 14 will ensure that we have a far more workable dispute resolution mechanism by which co-ops will be able to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board as opposed to going to the courts to resolve certain kinds of disputes within their mandate.

As we know, tribunals like the Landlord and Tenant Board, which are specialized tribunals which have been given very specific mandates and have the expertise in dealing with these types of issues, are far better suited to deal with these matters than the courts, not to mention the fact that the Landlord and Tenant Board, or LTB, is far more specialized in nature. They have the expertise to look at these issues. The proceedings are far cheaper than going to the courts, and they are, from a timeline point of view, perhaps far more expedited as well.

We know the challenges with the courts. Courts are busy. They deal with all kinds of issues. For co-ops to be able to go to the courts, not only is there that added expense of going to the court system, but then there's also the issue around the time, as to how long it takes to resolve these disputes, in terms of getting them heard and getting a decision from a judge. And there may be issues around expertise—not to undermine judges; they are very knowledgeable, but because they deal with so many different types of issues, they would not have very specific expertise like the Landlord and Tenant Board, which is a more specialized tribunal created under law

through the Residential Tenancies Act. So this point that the co-op housing sector has been advocating for some time, that we move most co-op tenure disputes from the courts to the Landlord and Tenant Board, is a very reasonable thing to do. I think it will result in a better system in place that will help resolve disputes much faster, in a manner that is cheaper and hopefully will result in decisions that are better decisions as well, both for the co-ops and those who live within co-ops. I think this is the right move.

I'm really happy that this bill is tabled so early on in the session so that it gives us the opportunity to have proper debate here, at the committee and, of course, third reading, so that we can pass this into law as quickly as possible.

The timing for this bill is quite appropriate as well. As we probably all know, 2012 was the International Year of Cooperatives, declared by the United Nations, around the world, and I can tell you that at least in my community of Ottawa Centre, in my city of Ottawa, we had some incredible celebrations that took place during that year of co-ops. I think I learned far more about the co-op movement, what co-ops stand for and the manner in which they help people in all sectors, not just in housing. It was really incredible to have that year. I think it was really fitting to shine the light on co-operatives in our communities and highlight the good work that they do day in and day out.

What really amazed me is how little the general public knows about co-ops. They are very much part and parcel of our lives. We see them all the time, from credit unions to, obviously, housing co-ops. But I find in my conversations in my community that it's something people have very little appreciation of, in the sense that they don't know much about them. That's interesting, given the history of co-ops and how long they have existed in our society, in our community.

I think that the United Nations declaring 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives really helped move the yardstick in making people aware—at least, obviously, I can speak for Ontario—in our province of what co-ops are, what they do, what their mandate is and how they are really helping to foster a more just and fair society.

Speaker, I think I've mentioned this in the House before: I belong to a renewable energy co-op in my community. It's the first of its kind in eastern Ontario, where a co-operative has been created to promote more renewable energy. They've got a few projects on the go. I'm very proud to be a member. I just marvel at the way the decisions are made in that co-op, how everybody's views are taken into account and how that co-op is really taking the necessary steps in promoting renewable energy, and obviously they are doing that through the Green Energy Act, through the FIT and microFIT programs. It's amazing how many people are interested, how many people are contributing—people like myself who are not able to take advantage of the microFIT program because of the way my roof is designed or facing.

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But here's a co-op which is giving an opportunity for people to put in smaller amounts of money and be able to take part in a very large movement in greening our environment and making sure that we're generating electricity in a renewable fashion. It's just one very specific example of how co-operatives are making a difference in all different sectors in our communities, and mine in particular is definitely a shining example of that.

Coming back to co-op housing, I wanted to talk about the work that the Co-operative Housing Association of Eastern Ontario, CHASEO, does in my community. It's a co-operation of co-ops, an extremely vibrant organization which does some really good work in my community and across eastern Ontario.

CHASEO represents about 43 housing co-ops, plus five associate co-ops, providing units for 4,345 households in eastern Ontario. That translates into affordable housing for 12,100 people. That's a very significant number of people that they provide affordable housing to. There are five French-speaking and seven bilingual co-ops in eastern Ontario that are represented by CHASEO. There are 360 accessible units available in eastern Ontario housing co-ops, making sure, of course, that people of all abilities have access to good, affordable housing. Also, very importantly, I think, there are five seniors' co-ops in eastern Ontario that are represented through CHASEO.

CHASEO is a marvellous organization. I've had great opportunities to work with them on many issues. This particular issue, Bill 14, is one key issue that they have raised with me on numerous occasions. On a regular basis, I attend their spring congress and AGM and their fall education day, and I have had the opportunity to speak at both those events on an annual basis.

The issue around a better dispute settlement mechanism, the one that is sort of encapsulated in Bill 14, comes up often. I'm really happy to see that this bill is moving forward and has the support of all three parties, because I look forward to going back again to the meetings coming up and being able to deliver that good news to them, saying, "Look, your legislators listened to you, and by working together, they were able to deliver on something that is extremely important to you." I think that really highlights our work, which is to help people. It really translates into those who live in co-op housing and will be able to assist them in a very meaningful way.

I want to mention the names of the board members who are part of CHASEO, because it's such an engaged organization in my community. It does so much in promoting co-op housing and providing necessary services to co-op housing. A big thank-you to the president, Angie Blais; the secretary, Helen Friel; staff liaison Catherine Lee; and Vice-President Daniel Monoogian. Their interim director is Sharon Virtue, their treasurer is Michelle Bainbridge, and their director is Flo Bernier. Of course, their executive director is Céline Carrière, who works very, very hard. The board of directors and the CHASEO staff work extremely hard in making sure that they're providing services to all the housing co-ops.

In my riding, in Ottawa Centre alone—very fortunately, I think—I have 12 housing co-ops. I've had the chance to visit every single one of them. They are great places for people to live. A lot of good work, a lot of good initiatives come out of all those housing co-ops. Most of them are concentrated in the downtown part of my community, but then, if you really look at the map, you will see them on the south end of my riding, close to where I live, and to the west end and east end as well.

It's incredible, the diversity of these co-ops and the kinds of different projects that they take on. So let me go through the list, because I think it's instructive, and I'll speak to a few of them because I've had the chance to work with some of them.

There's the Abiwin Housing Co-operative, which is located right downtown, actually not that far from my community office. A very vibrant community.

Alex Laidlaw Housing Co-operative is located on Booth Street.

Cartier Square Housing Co-operative is on Cooper.

The Catalpa Housing Co-operative is on Queen Elizabeth Drive—beautiful. It's right on the Rideau Canal. It is a series of row houses which have been turned into a co-operative. I was there last summer talking to some of the neighbours. Just absolutely gorgeous architecture, almost turn of the century, and the fact that they have this beautiful view of the Rideau Canal, which is a UNESCO world heritage site, as we all know, is remarkable.

Then there is the Coopérative d'habitation d'app. Desjardins, on Empress Avenue, which is a French senior co-op located in my community. A fantastic group of people—I've done some work with them. They had some challenges, actually, which could have been far better resolved had Bill 14 existed than resorting to court systems, so I know they will be particularly happy with Bill 14. Now, I think things are far better and smoother at the Desjardins co-op, but a direct example that I think they would have been far better served if we had on the books something like Bill 14 already passed.

Dalhousie Housing Co-op is, again, on Somerset Street.

Located in the community of Glebe—many of you know where Glebe is located in my riding—we have the Glebe Housing Co-operative.

Then there is the Shefford Heritage Housing Co-operative on 300 Cooper. Just last summer they celebrated their 100th anniversary—the 100th anniversary of this beautiful architecture. This building is to be marveled at. If you come to Ottawa, if you're in my riding, I will encourage you to please go to Cooper Street and just stand outside the Shefford Heritage Housing Co-op and have a look at this building. It is absolutely gorgeous architecture, and inside the building is beautiful.

The story is incredible. It was in the 1990s that the building was owned by a landlord. It was just falling apart; it was not being maintained. A group of people got together and said, "You know what? We want to take this building, we want to turn this into a co-op, and we want to fix this building and make it into a quality place to

live.” They did so, and the provincial government at that time came to their aid in making that happen. They have restored the building, outside and inside.

I had the chance this summer, when they were celebrating the 100th anniversary of the building, to see some of the units, to see the beautiful staircase, the banisters, the artwork that’s hanging in the hallways and, like I said, the architecture outside. It is probably one of my favourite buildings in my riding, and again, hats off to the members of the co-op at Shefford for the work they do day in and day out in maintaining this building and the incredible work they’re doing in building a vibrant community.

Again, just last summer we had a great celebration outdoors. It was kind of a rainy day—rainy, sunny, it was one of those weird days, but you know, people were out. There was music and there was poetry. There was a bit of storytelling, a bit of recalling the history. I think some of our friends who are visiting right now in the gallery were there for that opening. So that was fantastic.

Then there’s the Tompkins Housing Co-operative, which is located on Preston Street in Little Italy, another very vibrant part of my riding.

The Carillon Co-op is literally probably 10 doors down from where I live on Prince of Wales Drive in my riding, another very nice community.

On the west end of my community there’s the Dovercourt Co-op and the Westboro Housing Co-operative.

All this to say, Speaker, that I have the great privilege of representing a community where co-op housing is very important, and this issue that we’re debating in Bill 14 is extremely important in all of these co-operatives. I’ve visited them all. I’ve had the chance to speak to people. I’ve been working closely with CHASEO, the Co-operative Housing Association of Eastern Ontario, and again and again and again the issue that has come up is, let’s make the dispute resolution process a simpler one. The way it is structured right now makes it extremely difficult for co-ops to conduct their affairs. Courts are costly. The dispute resolution process that takes place in courts is far lengthier in time, and decisions may not be that of a specialist body like the Landlord and Tenant Board.

I think the change that we’re making, I can tell you, will see a very direct impact in my community, in all the 12 co-ops—co-op housing—that are located in the riding of Ottawa Centre. In every single one of them, I know these changes are very much appreciated because it is going to allow the members of the co-operative to manage their affairs in a far more reasonable manner than what we have in place.

So I’m very appreciative that this bill has come forward. I know it has been a few times that it has been here, but I feel fairly confident this time around that this will pass this Legislature and will be law, hopefully as soon as we all can do.

I think the most important message that we’re sending out is that as the members of this Legislature, as duly elected representatives, regardless of which part of the province we come from, regardless of the political ideol-

ogy or value sets that we belong to, we are listening as a collective. We are paying attention to issues that are important in our communities. We are taking very direct steps that will help ensure that lives are being improved in places like co-op housing.

I think this bill may be simpler in many regards or may not deal with the big heavy policy issues that we all engage in and debate at all times. I would argue, Speaker, that it’s still as valid, as important, for those whose lives it’s going to impact. I think that is our job, as members of this Legislature: to listen to our communities, to be there at that street level, be able to go door to door, talk to folks and see what those issues are, and be able to then translate that in work that is going to improve their lives. I have heard many times from folks who have talked about this issue, and I look forward to the passage of this legislation so that I can go back to them and say, “We listened. All three parties listened. We worked together, and we got it done in a co-operative fashion.”

Speaker, I look forward to hearing the views of other members, but I just wanted to take this opportunity to assert my support for this bill and, of course, talk about some of the great co-operative housing in my community and how it’s going to impact their lives and improve them.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Liz Sandals: I’m delighted that we have with us today members from the Ontario Principals’ Council in the gallery here and, I suspect, in other places. I’d like to introduce Ken Arnott from the York Region District School Board, who is the president of OPC. Other board members are Bob Pratt, from Delta Secondary School in Hamilton, in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board; Sharon Bowes, from Kerns Public School in Thornloe, in the Ontario northeast district school board; John Hamilton, from the Sutherland Public School in Sunderland, in the Durham board; Susan Ferguson, from the North Lambton Secondary School in Forest, in the Lambton Kent board; Mary Linton Brady, from the Milliken Public School in Toronto, in the Toronto DSB, obviously; Lisa Vincent, from Hastings-Prince Edward DSB; Naeem Siddiq, from North Albion Collegiate in Toronto, again the Toronto DSB; Sandra Stewart, from Avalon Public School in Orléans, in the Ottawa-Carleton DSB; and finally, Ian McFarlane, who is the executive director of OPC. We’re very pleased to the principals with us here today.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I’m proud to introduce Bernard Tangelder, from the great riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Bernard is with TD Research, and he’s here to spend the day at Queen’s Park.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to introduce Dmitri Logounov, who is a small business owner from Don Valley West joining us today.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to introduce Helen Musclow, a resident of Cambridge and a distinguished volunteer for Victim Services of Waterloo Region, who is here in the gallery today. She has an extensive biography; I know I can't read it all into the record. I appreciate her being here.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce two constituents of mine from Orillia: Deb Wagner and Dawson Pasiecznik. They're here today.

I'd also like to welcome the Ontario Principals' Council as well. We had a great meeting this morning.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd like to welcome a constituent and hard-working student placement in my office, Noah Adams, to the Legislature.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm delighted today to introduce Julie Rosenberg. She's the mother of a page in this session, Emily Kostiuik—I hope I got that name right. Of course, Julie and Emily are from the great riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville. Please welcome them.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to introduce the hardest-working city councillor from the city of North Bay, Mr. Mac Bain.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I'd like to welcome visiting members of the Ontario Principals' Council: Naeem Siddiq, Sandra Stewart, Sharon Bowes, Lisa Vincent, Peggy Sweeney, Laura Hyde; Ian McFarlane, the executive director; and of course, Ken Arnott, president. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like to welcome Marilyn Savage, from London, who is here on behalf of her 93-year-old parents, Everett and Simone Price, who have separated by the long-term-care system after 67 years of marriage and are seeking reunification from the government.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I too would like to welcome Helen Musclow this morning. Helen is not only a dedicated volunteer with Victim Services of Waterloo Region, but she has also volunteered with Relay for Life and the MS Society. Volunteerism is her life. It's a pleasure to welcome her to Queen's Park today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): In the Speaker's gallery, please welcome Mr. Alvin Curling, former Speaker in the 38th Parliament and member of provincial Parliament for Scarborough North and Scarborough—Rouge River.

We'd also like to welcome the students with Mr. Curling, who are from Seneca College.

yesterday that I barely know where to begin. We heard from cabinet secretary Peter Wallace. He testified that on July 27, 2011, cabinet was made aware of Project Vapour, the code name for the Oakville gas plant cancellation.

Premier, you were part of that cabinet and there at the time of those mini briefings. A year later you stood in this Legislature and said all the documents were released, yet you knew full well at that time that we had no Project Vapour documents. So what's your answer today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just before I answer—and I'm happy to answer the question—I just want to remind everyone that the UN has said that this is International Day of Happiness. So we're just going to have a happy day in here.

Peter Wallace also said yesterday, "I'm satisfied that the Ministry of Energy responded to the request in good faith and worked appropriately to provide the documents requested by the committee." So my contention is that all that has been asked for has been provided.

What we've done is we've expanded the mandate of the committee. We've allowed for a much broader range of questioning, and that will allow all of the questions of the opposition to be answered. So I'm very pleased that this process is under way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, on September 25, you stood in this House and said, "The total cost of the Oakville relocation is \$40 million." Now your energy minister says the OPA gave you that number and it could be wrong. He told us to call OPA officials to testify and "give us their calculations." Well, yesterday we did exactly that and they said to us that on September 24, "...a memorandum of understanding stated there would be other costs to the relocation in addition to the \$40 million."

Premier, you told us the total cost was \$40 million when you knew, one full day before, that was not correct. I'm sensing a pattern here, Premier, so today, what's your answer?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: In a news release on September 24, 2012, the OPA stated that the sunk costs for relocating the plant were \$40 million and that they took on gas management and turbine costs in exchange for a lower price for power. This was confirmed in committee yesterday as well.

The memorandum of understanding the opposition is referring to has been public and available to the opposition since September. Also, the Oakville plant contract has been online, 500 pages, since December.

We have been open and transparent throughout the entire process. That's why we asked the Auditor General to look into the costs of the Oakville relocation. The costs that the OPA spoke of yesterday have been public since September. This is not new. So let's allow the Auditor General to do his job.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. Good morning, Premier. My question is for the Premier. There was so much damning evidence at the justice committee

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, we've now heard, first from the province's top bureaucrat, that you knew one thing to be true, but the legislative record shows you said something completely opposite here. Then we heard from the Ontario Power Authority that you knew one thing to be true, but your legislative record shows again you said something completely different in this House. In your media interview yesterday, you said, "... to the best of our ability at every ... juncture we have given the information that we had."

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Premier, sworn testimony at the justice committee yesterday has now proven that is not the case.

Yesterday, you also said, "There may be differences with what we have said in the past."

So what's your answer today?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The OPA stated in their press release on September 24, 2012, that as part of the re-negotiated contract, the OPA took on gas management and turbine costs in exchange for a lower price paid for power.

Yesterday, this was confirmed at committee when OPA vice-president JoAnne Butler said, "In the negotiation, because we were taking on some of the gas ... management fees, because we were" taking on the gas turbines and sunk costs, "we did get a lowering of what we call the net revenue requirement or the monthly payment ... you've heard about...." This quote means that we are paying a significantly lower monthly price for power.

Mr. Speaker, again, we have asked the auditor to look into these costs. We have expanded the mandate of the committee, and the Premier has committed to going before the committee, if asked.

Let's allow the committee to do their work.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is also to the Premier. Premier, to date, your response to questions regarding the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants has been all too familiar. You've simply picked up where your predecessor left off. When faced with the consequences of your government's political interference, it's the same old McGuinty-Wynne story: You deflect, deny, defend.

As we heard from not one but two witnesses in committee yesterday, you sat at the cabinet table and were briefed on the memorandum of understanding to move the Oakville plant. Both you and your Minister of Energy were briefed that the cost of relocating the Oakville gas plant would be significantly higher than the \$40 million you've continually claimed.

Will you come clean with the people of Ontario about what you knew and when you knew it? Or do we have to wait until you're questioned under oath to finally get at the truth?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really agree with the Minister of Energy that we should let the committee do its work. The whole reason, Mr. Speaker, that we wanted to expand the mandate of the justice committee was to allow them to look at all of the issues involved in this.

From the moment I took on this job and before I took on the job, I have said that I believed that we needed to get all the questions answered, that we needed to make sure that all the documents were available. That's what this exercise is about.

I have said I will appear before the committee. I have asked the Auditor General to look at both situations. We have expanded the mandate of the committee. Far from denying, I have said there are questions that need to be answered and we want to provide the information. They're not simple questions. The answers are not simple. That's why we need all these processes in order to get the answers in place.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. I would say to the member for Northumberland-Quinte West and the member for Huron-Bruce, I can hear you loudly, but I cannot hear the answer that's coming across. I would expect the party that asked the question would be the one that would be quiet to listen to the answer.

Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Premier: Your latest strategy is very transparent. Your Minister of Energy has tried to pin your political decisions on the Ontario Power Authority. Yesterday, he claimed that, "The Ontario Power Authority did all the negotiation; they did the calculation of costs. They provided the cost to us."

Premier, we know that is not correct. As we heard in committee yesterday, political staff even interfered in the negotiations with TransCanada, by directing the OPA on what counter-offers to make to TransCanada.

I'll quote directly from OPA vice-president JoAnne Butler's written statement: "The government was a party to the negotiations ... in the relocation of both power plants. In the case of the Oakville plant, it was represented by the Ministry of Energy and by Infrastructure Ontario."

Will you instruct the Minister of Energy to correct his record and apologize for misleading this House?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Sit down, please.

I would ask the member to withdraw that statement.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we're used to hearing them listen.

I have a quote from Peter Wallace, secretary of cabinet, in his testimony, referring to whether or not there were any directions given with respect to the documents: "They had not been able to find"—his investigation by

the Attorney General's office—"any concrete evidence to substantiate the allegation, that the witness, the individual involved, appeared to be truthful, that she appeared not to have, in her own mind, offered specific and highly inappropriate direction to the power authority."

We provided the information and the documentation that were available to us. Colin Andersen, when he exposed himself to the media here several weeks ago, answered this question: "At any point during these searches—we are talking about all of them, not just this one—did you feel that you were under a great deal of political pressure to either produce or not produce records?" Colin Andersen's answer was, "No."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Premier: I'll point out to the Premier that that memorandum of understanding was available in September. They knew about it, and withheld that until October 15, when the then Premier could scamper off and prorogue this Legislature.

Attempts to claim that the OPA is an arm's-length agency after years of political interference are ridiculous. Your government has used ministerial directives to inject politics into everything the OPA does. It's rich to claim that it's an arm's-length agency after you were caught red-handed directing it to cancel the plants. You've blamed them for the withholding of documents. You've blamed them for the siting of the Oakville and Mississauga plants. We found out in committee yesterday that it was the sole decision of your government where to site those plants.

Will you admit that you only consider the OPA an arm's-length agency when you're using it to hide behind one of your scandals?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Stop the clock. Please sit down.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have said from the beginning that there were three parties who wanted the relocation of the gas plants. We decided it. We won the election. We moved the gas plants—relocated the gas plants. The Ontario Power Authority negotiated; they provided the information to us. The Ontario Power Authority—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke: You asked the question, and I would expect you to be the most behaved person to get the answer.

And the rest, also, that are following him: I'd ask you to give up on it. Calm down a little.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, we had a number of witnesses yesterday. One of them was the mayor of Oakville, and he had this to say: "Anyone who wishes to criticize the cost of cancelling it would do everybody a favour if they would explain how they would have done it differently."

Can the opposition do us a favour and table the cost analysis they performed to relocate the gas plant when they promised to move it?

The OPA had on their website all of the necessary information. They had a press release, the sunk costs, they referred to the power cost deal, they had the contract online—500 pages worth—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The leader of the third party.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Minister of Energy stood up in the House and said, "Every single time the question of cost has come up ... we relied on the information that was provided to us by the Ontario Power Authority." Does the Premier stand by that assertion?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, we are very eager—I am personally eager, our government is eager—that we make sure that every piece of information is available, that all of the questions about cost, the questions about the relocation, the questions about documents, that they are available.

That is why we have opened up the process. That's why we've expanded the mandate of the committee; that's why we proposed that. That's why I've asked the Auditor General to look at both situations, and that's why the committee is doing its work. I really believe that we should let the committee do its work, and it should report back to the Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, a senior VP at the OPA—the Ontario Power Authority—told the justice committee that the Oakville cancellation would cost the public somewhere between \$319 million and \$467 million—and that's before you get to new transmission costs.

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For months, the government has claimed that costs were \$40 million. For example, Premier McGuinty said in question period, "On the matter of cost, Speaker, it's \$40 million ... we've nailed that down."

Why was the government claiming costs were \$40 million when their own bureaucrats were telling them all along that their costs were much, much higher than that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, again, I have the quote—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Northumberland-Quinte West, you are warned.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, again, I have the quote from the vice-president of the OPA in testimony yesterday: "In the negotiation, because we were taking on some of the gas ... management fees, because we were"

taking on the gas turbines and sunk costs, “we did get a lowering of what we call the net revenue requirement or the monthly payment ... you’ve heard about....”

Mr. Speaker, those costs—and the witness did not take off or subtract the price-beneficial arrangements with respect to the power price. When you take that into account, the cost is brought down very, very significantly.

The Auditor General is looking into it. There will be other witnesses who will look at the figures and work certain assumptions—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Answer?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —in terms of the prices.

Let the committee do its job. The opposition should be patient instead of having a kangaroo court.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the very same VP told Ontarians yesterday that the government should have known that the cancellation cost a lot more than \$40 million because the government participated in negotiations and signed the very memorandum of understanding that set costs that much higher.

How can the government negotiate a deal, sign off on it, and then get the facts wrong?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, there’s something really strange here. Number one, the memorandum of understanding they’re referring to—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Stop the clock. I will have peace in here, at least quiet so we can have the answer.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The memorandum of understanding that the opposition parties are referring to was online September 24. As well, the 500-page contract with the Oakville plant was online—500 pages of it. The memorandum of understanding, the press release, all the information they’re referring to and which was used by the witness from OPA yesterday, was made public months ago. They had all of that information. They never asked any questions on it previously. All of a sudden, it’s very relevant.

Why did you not read those documents that were made public? Why were you doing your job negligibly? Pay attention to what you’re provided with.

Mr. Speaker, all the documents were made available, including the memorandum of understanding that was referred to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. New question.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier—but I have to say the Minister of Energy must have forgotten that the government prorogued the House so we couldn’t ask those questions in the fall. That’s the strange thing that’s going on around here.

Nonetheless, to the Premier: Yesterday, the secretary of cabinet, the most senior civil servant in Ontario, said with respect to the cancellation of the gas plants, “This is the government driving the bus.” Both the secretary of cabinet and a VP at the OPA told the justice committee that senior political staff from the Premier’s office were involved in the Oakville and Mississauga cancellations.

Is the Premier ready to admit that it was the Liberal government that was driving the bus on this gas plant scandal, and to stop blaming the OPA for the fact that it went in the ditch?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said, and it has been said by others, that this was a political decision, absolutely. I’ve said quite clearly it was a political decision. We’ve all in this House said that we would have made the same political decision. I really believe that this is common ground.

Let me read what was also said by Peter Wallace yesterday: “[T]hese files are inherently political. The cancellation and relocation of a gas plant is not an action undertaken autonomously by public service officials. This is an inherently political matter.”

No matter which party is in office, it is a political matter. To the question of the leader of the third party, I’ve said that this is a political decision, as it would have been had she been the Premier.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I’m going to ignore the Premier’s misinformation about the position that the New Democrats took during the election campaign. Across Ontario, people are facing real challenges. They’re being told by their government that we’re facing tough times, and they’re feeling it in their hospitals, in their schools and in the growing cost of everyday lives.

In the midst of this, the government has handed millions of dollars—up to a billion dollars—to private power companies so they could win a seat or win a couple of seats in a very tight election campaign. What does the Premier say to the people across Ontario who are sick to death of this government’s misplaced priorities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thought that all parties had said that they did not agree with the placement of either of these gas plants. I understand that the—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. The member for Nipissing, I think the same rules apply to you. When I stand, we’re supposed to be quiet. I’m trying very hard to get through question period, and I would ask for your support.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I apologize; I was looking the other way.

The consensus in this House was that all parties agreed that these gas plants should not be sited where they were. So—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Lanark, you’re warned.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The agreement among all of the parties was that these gas plants should not be placed where they were. We followed through on that decision. We made that decision.

My consistent position has been that I wish that there had been a different process up front. I wish that there had been a different community process. I wish that we had made a different decision in the beginning because there had been a better upfront process. The fact is, that didn't happen, and so what I have said is, let's get all the information out on the table. Let's make sure there are processes in place to make sure that everyone, on all sides of the House, has their questions answered. That's what the Auditor General's investigation is about; that's what the broadening of the committee mandate is; that's why I'm going to go before the committee. Let's let those processes unfold.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Once again in Ontario, what a Liberal Premier thought and reality are two quite divergent things. The money this government spent cancelling these plants was enough to eliminate the wait in home care, not just this year but for many, many years into the future in this province. That was enough money to fund a First Start initiative to get young people working and to hire 7,500 full-time nurses in communities across this province. People have been asked time and time again to make sacrifices in tough times. Why can't the Premier offer a straight answer or a real explanation for this scandalous abuse of the people's trust?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've said, we've put a number of processes in place to get the questions answered.

Mayor Burton yesterday said: "Our citizens organized their own effort to ask the province to rethink the proposed power plant...."

"They won promises from all parties to stop the proposed power plant...."

"In Oakville, we certainly believed that we had those promises and that we could rely on them from all three parties...."

"So yes, we felt supported by all parties."

These were political decisions that were made. They are political decisions that would have been made by all parties. We were in the position to follow through on those promises. We did that, and now we have opened up the process to get all the information on the table and get the questions answered that are being posed by the public and by the members of this House.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Please sit down. Order.

New question.

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CASINOS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question is for the Premier. Your statement that the host fee formula for a new

Toronto casino will be the same as all other municipalities has been directly and repeatedly contradicted by the OLG. For five days you told us there was no special deal. Just a few minutes ago, and after your repeated denials, the OLG has announced that they will be redoing the host fee formula to be fair to all municipalities. Premier, clearly there was a special deal, and you got caught.

My question to you today is straightforward: Who is calling the shots in this province? Is it the Premier or is it the OLG and the international casinos? Will you simply admit that your government offered a secret deal only to the city of Toronto?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I had asked the OLG representatives to come in today, Paul Godfrey and Rod Phillips, Mr. Speaker. I had asked for that meeting to be set up. I gave clear instruction to OLG that the formula for hosting fees has to be the same for all municipalities and that there will be no special deals. OLG has agreed to go back and review the formula based on those principles.

The principles of equal treatment and fairness will govern the formula going forward. That is my consistent position. That has always been my position, and OLG is in agreement with that. I called that meeting. I asked them to come in. I've given them clear direction, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Like every other Premier under the Liberal banner, you got caught in this mess. For the past five days, you have strongly denied that there was ever a secret deal offered to the city of Toronto, but you have refused to release the formula being used to calculate the hosting fees being promised, and you have failed to answer even simple questions about how the \$50 million to \$100 million number ever came about. Shockingly, despite nearly two months passing since your Liberal coronation, you are only now just getting around to meeting with the heads of the OLG to seek clarity on this important file. Today we heard that the OLG is immediately reviewing the host formula to ensure it is fair to every municipality in this province. Clearly, there was a secret deal only being offered to your hometown.

Premier, do you actually believe that a new Toronto casino will bring more profits than the entire Las Vegas strip? Will you now admit there was a secret deal to the city of Toronto?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I've been very clear on a number of things from long before I was the Premier. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I was very clear in my early meetings with the OLG that I expected that there would be a fair process across the province. You can have a conversation with Mr. Godfrey, and he will tell you about the first meetings

I had with them. Having a fair process across the province, making sure that municipalities could decide whether or where they wanted a casino, that has been my position from the beginning.

I asked for a meeting with OLG. I've made it clear that it's my understanding that there would be a fair process across the province, that the same formula would be applied evenly across the province. That has been my position. OLG is now crystal clear that that is my position. They have gone back to review that formula and make sure that it is so, Mr. Speaker.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday a senior vice-president at the Ontario Power Authority told Ontarians that the Premier's office was negotiating around the Ontario Power Authority with regard to the Oakville gas plant. But she wasn't sure who in the Premier's office was responsible for negotiating with TransCanada. She said that put the OPA at a real disadvantage.

Who in the Premier's office was going around the OPA to negotiate with TransCanada?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, all of the information has been made available; that's available in terms of documentation. The OPA has acknowledged that they negotiated. They did the final contract. They decided which documents were going to be released. They made all the final decisions. They provided the information on costs to us.

We now have a committee with a broadened mandate, thanks to the Premier, and we will listen to all the witnesses that come forward, and we will have a decision at the end of the day from the committee. The committee is sitting as a jury, and the Speaker will ultimately make the decision as a judge, and let the process take place.

We have the OPA accepting the responsibility of having made the decision, having accepted the responsibility for the transparency of the documents that had to be released. We're comfortable now with the process that we have in committee, so that any doubts can be erased.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The minister needs to get an up-to-date response note. That was a previous question from a previous asker.

I'm going to go back to the Premier. Peter Wallace, the most senior civil servant in Ontario, told Ontarians yesterday that two senior Premier's office staff were going around the Ontario Power Authority to TransCanada while the OPA was trying to limit the cost to ratepayers. Can the Premier explain why the Premier's office was interfering in negotiations with TransCanada?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I can share the information that I have. The information I have, as the minister, is from the OPA, that they accepted the respon-

sibility for the negotiations. There may or may not have been other input, but they made the final decision. They made the final negotiations. They provided the documents.

We have the Auditor General looking into it. The Auditor General has access to every piece of paper in every ministry in the provincial government. He will provide his report.

Mr. Speaker, we are satisfied that the issues are being discussed in committee and that we have acted professionally and ethically every step of the way with respect to this government.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. This government has made jobs a priority, and we all know that research and innovation are key drivers of this knowledge-based economy. When businesses innovate, they are able to grow and create jobs.

But one major hurdle that businesses face in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South is access to venture capital. Venture capital is very critical for the businesses that want to succeed and compete.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is this government doing to ensure that businesses have access to venture capital so that they can invest, grow and create jobs for Ontarians?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I thank the member for that question. Small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario generally go beyond the traditional banking system. That's why we created Ontario Venture Capital II. Ontario Venture Capital II is based on the highly successful Ontario Venture Capital I.

Yesterday, the Premier announced our \$50-million investment in the creation of this venture capital fund. The federal government will be investing another \$50 million, and we expect \$200 million will be invested by the private sector, to create a fund in the amount of \$300 million. We expect that during the 12-year lifespan of this fund, it's going to generate \$4.45 billion in economic activity to Ontario.

This is a great—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Answer.

Hon. Reza Moridi: —for the province of Ontario. Our government is committed to support research, innovation and commercialization of research to grow the economy and create jobs in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Mr. Speaker, it is great to hear that Ontario companies have a new source of funding that they can turn to. In challenging economic times, governments must work with the private sector so that innovators, small and medium-sized businesses, are able to grow and create jobs.

The minister mentioned that this is the second Ontario venture fund, and it is based on the success of the first

one. Mr. Speaker, through you, back to the minister: Could the minister tell this House what the first fund has accomplished?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member for that question. In 2008, we created the Ontario Venture Capital Fund by investing \$90 million, and that created \$150 million in investments from the private sector and from institutional sectors as well. So we created a fund in the amount of \$205 million to fund research and innovation in this province.

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This fund was very highly successful. Just in the year 2011, the Ontario companies that benefitted from this fund created \$139 million in revenue and employed 1,000 people. This model is working, and we are very proud that we are supporting Ontario businesses and innovators to create jobs, to contribute to our economy and to create jobs for Ontarians.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is to the Minister of Energy. During testimony in the justice committee yesterday we heard from Peter Wallace, the secretary of cabinet, who spoke of allegations that a member of the Ontario public service directed the Ontario Power Authority to remove documents from the 56,000 pages that we've received to date. He stated, "As head of the Ontario public service, I would be ... concerned" about "any allegation of inappropriate behaviour by a public servant." An internal investigation was then launched against Jesse Kulendran.

Minister, when was the government informed of the investigation into Jesse Kulendran's behaviour? Who was at the clandestine meeting that she attended with political operatives who gave her instructions to remove documents from the pile that we received?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: When the CEO of the Ontario Power Authority was here at Queen's Park answering questions, he was asked the question: "How often do you talk to political staff and minister's staff at the ministry? Are you given direction? Does it happen daily? Every week?" His answer was—this is Colin Andersen—"No. In our discussions, we are with the deputy's side of things and the bureaucrats that were dealing with it."

We have accepted the fact that it was a political decision to relocate those gas plants. It was as political as theirs was, and so that is the issue.

With respect to any potential interference, Peter Wallace did give some evidence. His quote yesterday was "they had not been able to find any concrete evidence to substantiate the allegation, that the witness, the individual involved, appeared to be truthful, that she appeared not to have, in her own mind, offered specific and highly inappropriate direction to the power authority."

We have been acting ethically. We've been acting professionally. The right people have been doing the right things. We stand behind that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, clearly the Minister of Energy should know about a leaked memo that the Ontario Power Authority provided to the Progressive Conservative caucus, where two dedicated OPA officials, Kristin Jenkins and Ziyaad Mia, were ordered to remove documents. In that document, Jenkins said, "Both Ziyaad and I have been clear that this is in fact what Jesse Kulendran told us to do"—referring to an order to remove documents.

Minister, do you take this matter seriously? If so, can you give us some answers as to why a civil servant, a known former Liberal Party staffer and a Liberal Party donor, would take it upon herself to order the removal of documents?

I have a very simple question, Minister: Who really gave that order?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Again, when the CEO of the OPA was here at Queen's Park he was asked a question: During the search for documents was there "anyone from the Premier's office, minister's office, or the ministry itself who directed or were involved in the search? At the OPA?" Mr. Andersen's response was, "At the OPA? Nobody was coming to the OPA with regards to the documents that we are talking about today."

We have the justice committee. We have the opportunity to bring witnesses in. They're trying to make this a court here. We have the justice committee, which they asked to have set up, to examine these issues. Let them do their work. The provincial auditor has access to every particular document. They're seeing ghosts behind every door.

CASINOS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. The new Liberal government is ignoring the people of Ontario just like the old Liberal government did. Communities like Hamilton, Kingston and Toronto have come out in strong opposition to being host sites to casinos. Yet the OLG is moving full steam ahead with privatizing gambling while giving companies sweetheart deals to bid for contracts.

Premier, will you choose to listen to the people of Ontario or to the Donald Trumps of the world?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I think that we made it very clear yesterday and today that there are no special deals. The formula is the same throughout the province. We met with the members of the OLG today. We've asked them to review to ensure that the principles of fairness and equity are being maintained.

The Premier has been very clear for weeks and months, prior to even being Premier, that she wants this to be dealt with fairly throughout the province. We're adhering to her wishes. OLG recognizes that. The people of Toronto and the people of all the other municipalities

and the councils: They'll make the decision because we've said that it's their decision to make.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: If the process was so transparent to begin with, then why the special meeting now to clarify the entire process?

Premier, the OLG privatization is having an adverse effect on people in cities and rural Ontario. People in Toronto and across Ontario don't want to be forced to accept a casino without being able to have a say. There's something wrong with this picture: a government and OLG negotiating sweetheart deals in their plan to privatize gaming, despite community opposition. Will you give Ontarians the ability to have a meaningful say when it comes to casinos in their communities?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear. It's the municipalities' decision. They're the ones that are going to make that decision first. From there, they'll decide what they're going to site and how they're going to proceed, and they'll have another opportunity to decide. We are giving the municipalities the power. They're the ones that will decide if they wish to proceed, and that's how it's going to be.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. My riding of Ajax-Pickering is where many new Ontarians call home. These newcomers make up over 30% of our province's workforce, and that number is expected to rise in the future. These individuals help us to meet our labour market needs and they make invaluable contributions as members of our community. We are fortunate that nearly three of every four working-aged newcomers have a post-secondary education.

Despite a wealth of skill and knowledge, many of them are unable to find work that is consistent with their education and their experience. My question to the minister is: What is the government doing to help our skilled newcomers find work in their fields?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member from Ajax-Pickering for the question. He's a great advocate for his community and for newcomers in his community. He understands the vital role that newcomers play in the workplace here in Ontario.

Before I answer the question, I'd just like to wish everyone who celebrates Nowruz here in Ontario—I want to wish them a happy new year, and I wish them a very peaceful and prosperous year.

Our government is committed to ensuring that everyone is able to put their skills to work here in our economy. That's why, as part of our immigration strategy here in Ontario, one of our key roles is to increase the employment rate of highly skilled immigrants. One way we're doing this is through our Bridge Training programs. So far, we've had over 50,000 people go through

our programs in over 100 different professions in 300 programs, and I'm very proud of that accomplishment.

Our Bridge Training programs are making a real difference, and they're helping highly skilled newcomers get the training and experience they need to get licensed and find work in their fields.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm sure all members agree that new Ontarians make valuable social, cultural and economic contributions to our province. When we help them find work consistent with their education and experience, we create benefits for their families and we improve our economy.

In my community of Ajax-Pickering, we are fortunate enough to be served by both the Ajax Welcome Centre Immigrant Services and the Women's Multicultural Resource and Counselling Centre. My constituents tell me that our Bridge Training programs are making a difference. They are helping newcomers find work and they are strengthening our workforce.

As this government remains committed to helping newcomers succeed, can the minister tell the House of the results we are seeing from the Bridge Training program?

Hon. Michael Coteau: The member is correct: We're seeing great results from our Bridge Training program here in Ontario. As I mentioned, our Bridge Training projects have helped over 50,000 people find jobs here in Ontario. They're making a real difference. We've invested, Mr. Speaker, since 2003, over \$240 million into that program, and I want to give you a couple of examples of some of the success stories.

An internationally educated nurse with 17 years of experience found work in her field, after five years of looking for a job, once she got into our Bridge Training programs. To me, that's a huge success.

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A senior engineer from Iraq could not find work in his field. After participating in our Bridge Training program, he's now an engineer licensed here in the province of Ontario.

I'm very proud of our success that we find here in Ontario through our Bridge Training programs. Helping immigrants find work consistent with their education experience benefits them and their families, and supports our economy here in Ontario. When newcomers do well here in the province of Ontario, the province of Ontario does well.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. On March 6, the public accounts committee requested very specific information from Ornge through a unanimous motion. We requested all banking records and statements, all international money transfers to either personal or corporate accounts, and all domestic money transfers to either personal or corporate accounts from all

20 companies that were involved in the Ornge scheme. Today, in this letter signed by Dr. McCallum, we have a response.

The response says, "The committee has requested disclosure of various records from all the companies which were affiliated, from time to time, with the Ornge family of companies." The letter goes on to say that much of that information is no longer available and that Ornge has no control over some of those companies. I'd like to know from the minister, will she help us get access to that information?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me assure the member opposite that Ornge is complying fully with the request. In fact, they have kept the committee up to date. They've provided status letters throughout the process. They've offered to appear before the committee; I believe Dr. McCallum is appearing this afternoon.

The committee, of course, can ask whatever questions they deem necessary, but I think the member opposite should know that there were four motions that the ministry complied with. Some 500,000 pages of documents—half a million pages of documents—have been delivered to the committee. A hundred boxes, four skid-loads of documents, have been delivered to the committee. We also have another 1.5 million pages of documents that are being provided on USB sticks, so Ornge is complying fully and the ministry is as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: This letter is dated today and signed by Dr. McCallum, telling us that the banking information for the 20 companies is not available. It's not available because a number of those companies are supposedly in bankruptcy. For some reason, Ornge no longer has control over some of those companies.

It's the flow of the money that we're interested in, not the five million documents that tell us nothing. What we want to know is, will the minister use her good office to ensure that everything is done that we can possibly do so that we get access to these financial documents?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Absolutely. If there are documents that exist and the committee has requested them, we will ensure that the committee gets those documents. I think that Ornge has delivered 500,000 pages of documents—that might keep you busy for a little while—and another 1.5 million pages on USB sticks. If there's more information that's available, the committee will receive it.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

You were all pretty good for about 10 minutes.

Interjection: Can you force them to answer the question, Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would say to the party that asked the question that I would expect them to be the most quiet in this room.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm done. Well, I'll just continue, then, Speaker.

I think the member opposite might be curious to know how much it cost to print 500,000 pages. It cost, just for the printing costs, \$167,000 for the requests already delivered.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. The leader of the third party.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. A 93-year-old couple in London has been separated by the long-term-care system after 67 years of marriage. The family reached out for help from this government, but so far they've been left hanging. One of Everett and Simone Price's daughters, Marilyn Savage, has travelled to Queen's Park this morning in the hopes that the Premier will finally hear of their plight.

When will this government uphold the principle of spousal reunification in long-term care and bring Marilyn's parents back together?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I want to say that my heart goes out to the family in this situation. I know that the Minister of Health is doing everything that she can to make sure of unification and that couples are able to be together. In fact, we changed the rules in long-term-care homes to allow for couples to be together. It is absolutely our predisposition and our intention to do everything we can to keep couples together. I know the Minister of Health will want to speak specifically to what we are doing now. But we have already taken action and we're very, very concerned that this is something that needs to happen, that people who have been together for that long—or even not that long because that's an exceptionally long time—would be able to spend their days together, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, Everett and Simone Price aren't getting any younger as they wait for reunification. This is not the way a seven-decade-long love story is supposed to end.

As recently as last week, I updated the government on the family's situation by letter. The health minister has already agreed in media reports and in the chamber that "It's the right thing to do" to bring this couple back together. She has publicly said that she's working on it, but so far the family hasn't heard a single peep from her office.

Will the Premier stand in her place today and tell Marilyn Savage what the plan is for reunifying her parents and when it's going to happen?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as the Premier said, we want people who want to be together to be as close together as possible, and that's why we have gone

as far as we have in bringing people together when both are in a long-term-care home. The next step is working on how we bring people closer together when one is in long-term care and one is in the community.

Speaker, I know that the CCACs work very closely with families who are facing these kinds of challenges. I urge families who are faced with an issue like this to work closely with the CCACs, who very much want to have people as close together as possible.

I would be more than happy to talk to the family members after question period. The CCACs are mandated to make this happen whenever possible. And actually, we have responded to the family from my office.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, as you know, Bill 160 came into force last April, and through it we transferred the mandate to prevent work-related injuries and illnesses from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to the Ministry of Labour. Minister, as part of this initiative, we also created a prevention office and appointed a chief prevention officer, the first government in Canada to do so. We did this, Minister, because we are a prudent government, a fiscally prudent government. We know that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and that's why we created this.

I had the opportunity to meet with the chief prevention officer when he came to my riding of Mississauga East-Cooksville. But Minister, I'd like to know: This is a great idea, but what concrete results has the prevention office achieved since its inception?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member for asking a very, very important question, because I think we'll all agree in this House that workplace safety is of utmost importance. We need to make sure that our family members, when they go to work, return home safely at the end of the day.

As the member mentioned, I'm very pleased to note that Mr. George Gritzotis was appointed as the province's first chief prevention officer. His mandate will be supported by the newly founded Prevention Council. This council will help protect workers and improve workplace health and safety across the province. The council includes four labour representatives, a non-union worker representative, four employer representatives, an occupational health and safety expert, and a representative from the WSIB.

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In fact, Speaker, on my very first full day on the job as Minister of Labour, I had the opportunity to meet with the Prevention Council and thank them for the work they're doing. In the supplementary, I will speak to the consultation they have launched to build a strategy for health and safety.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that update.

I also understand that building on the prevention office, your ministry is launching the first province-wide consultations to develop an integrated occupational health and safety strategy. Could you tell us a little bit more about the strategy and what the consultations are about?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Absolutely. Speaker, again I thank the member for the question.

We know that more often than not, a lot of workplace injuries can be easily prevented. That's why we need to do a lot of work to ensure that prevention is key in workplaces, so that workers are safe at all times. The changes that are currently under way in our province are one of the greatest transformations of Ontario's workplace health and safety system in over 30 years.

We are, at the moment, consulting on a strategy that will focus on issues such as addressing the needs of vulnerable workers, supporting small businesses, high-hazard activities, and providing effective support for workplace parties. Our consultations are ongoing right now until May 17, and we're encouraging everyone to participate in those consultations. Please visit our website at ontario.ca/labour and click on the link for the prevention strategy. We need your point of view on this very important issue so that we can get the right prevention strategy in place.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Rural Affairs. Minister, in the March 13 edition of the Peterborough Examiner, you were quoted as saying that you were shocked to hear that Kawartha Downs had failed to agree to terms with the province's negotiating team and that racing would end on March 30, eliminating up to 800 local jobs. The story went on to say that you were totally surprised because the negotiating team had put a substantive financial package on the table for Kawartha Downs, including race dates for 2013.

As the closure of this track will have a devastating impact on both of our ridings, would you please enlighten the House as to what was actually in this package that was described as substantive?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for the question.

I stand by what I said to the Peterborough Examiner. We did put a substantive package on the table to Kawartha Downs, to Mr. Ambrose, and we also entered into negotiations with him. He decided that he wanted to reject that very substantial package that was put on the table. Due to confidentiality in terms of commercial negotiations—these are the same packages that we offered to Woodbine, that we offered to Mohawk, that we offered to Western Fair. The decision was made by Mr. Ambrose whether racing was going to continue at Kawartha Downs or not.

We're prepared to work with any interested party to keep Kawartha Downs racing for 2013.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, this government seems to want to continue under a veil of secrecy instead of the minister representing the people that he said he would.

On August 16 of last year, you held a press conference, at which time you said that you had prepared a proposal which would keep slot facilities at the tracks and would maintain a share of slot revenues to support the industry. You said that these dollars stayed locally and created jobs for people in the community. You said that it was not a subsidy but, rather, an investment.

You also supported a private member's bill that would require referendums before casinos could be placed in communities, which you now say isn't necessary.

Minister, is becoming a cabinet minister worth betraying your constituents?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Sit down, please.

Minister.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the supplementary, a budget ago, when we had a budget allocation for the new Kawartha Trades and Technology—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you're warned. The Attorney General, order, please.

Minister?

Hon. Jeff Leal: When the opportunity was there for the honourable member to support something in our region—the Kawartha Trades and Technology Centre—she and her colleagues voted against it. They voted against every allocation for Trent University to enhance the economy in our area. They voted against it.

Let me tell you about horse racing, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Order. The member for Simcoe North, you're warned. I'm sure all of us know that when I stand, you're required to stay quiet.

Minister?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, I've touched a nerve.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would you like the answer or not?

Minister, finish.

Hon. Jeff Leal: When it comes to horse racing, I just want to quote the honourable John Snobelen, who was part of the panel. He used to be a friend of the friends opposite over there. What did Mr. Snobelen say? "The Slots at Racetracks Program was neither transparent nor accountable, and a new system was needed to put in place for horse racing in the province of Ontario."

We remain hopeful that there's going to be a strong and vibrant horse racing industry—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Stop the clock. Sit down, please.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I will keep standing until I get quiet in the House.

Hon. David Zimmer: Remember what happened to poor old Norm Sterling.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, you're warned.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. In three days, it will be a year since your government announced the divestiture or the sell-off of the Ontario Northland, and in that year what you've managed to do is kill the passenger train and create incredible uncertainty among the employees, and that's about it. The promised savings obviously haven't been realized.

Courting the northern vote in the Liberal leadership race, the current minister of transport said: "I'd put the pause button on ONTC decisions. We should not be making these one-off decisions."

Minister, will this government follow the advice of the now Minister of Transportation, put a hold on the ONTC divestment and give northerners a chance to come up with solutions to the province?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for a very, very good question and I also want to thank him for the time and consideration he has given in meeting with me, having raised these issues with me privately. I know that the Minister of Northern Development and Mines right now is putting together an advisory committee to look at these decisions. The Premier, who has made a number of trips to the north, has also been entering into discussions with mayors and communities to look at options for ONTC going forward.

We will also be looking at an integrated transportation plan for the north, which we think will address these concerns. I know they are very material to the member opposite. They certainly are to people on this side of the House as well, and I look forward to working with him quite closely, and with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, in finding solutions to his satisfaction, realizing that I think, having spent—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Sorry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear that our caucus was very contained through that entire exchange. The member had lots of time on the clock to get

to a supplementary. You didn't stop the clock. I would ask you to allow him to do a supplementary.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I have a—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I had a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I'd like a response.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Well, I'm about to. I would like the place to be quiet.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has moved a point of order, and I would ask the House if they agree to allow the supplementary. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker.

Once again to the Minister of Transportation: The government talks about its transportation strategy for the north, at the same time selling off vital transportation infrastructure. We move our product on rails, not strategies.

The government has struck a committee to discuss the ONTC, but participants have been asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement. Northerners deserve to know what the mandate of this committee is. Do they have the power to make decisions, or is it a shield to deflect the government's bungled attempts to sell northern infrastructure?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have been the minister only for a matter of weeks, and I've spent a lot of time with the member opposite and some of his colleagues going through these issues.

As we go through the divestiture period, ONTC services will continue. We've also been meeting with the mayors, and I met with FENOM, and I will continue to meet with FENOM, to look at the value of the rail service, commercial rail. It is our objective—and I think a shared objective with the members opposite—to improve transportation services in the north.

Half my family lives in Sudbury. I've used ONTC many times. None of my relatives ever thought it was optimal service, and I think we all believe we can do better. This government intends to hold itself to a pretty high standard when it comes to northern transportation and activity.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: Just for the record, I want to make it clear that we do love Justin Bieber; he is a phenom. FONOM is what the mayors are part of, not FENOM.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not a point of order.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to correct my record. Earlier in question period, in a response to a question from the member from Newmarket—Aurora, I said that \$167,000 had been spent on printing costs. That actually includes paralegals and the movers we had to

hire to move the paper. The printing costs for the 500,000 pages was \$129,386.47. More documents are coming.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Noted. Thank you for that correction.

Mr. Rob Leone: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Given the fact that the Minister of Health has been able to provide us with a set of documents and numbers and facts and figures related to the printing costs, we should get these bank account statements as soon as possible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not a point of order.

DEFERRED VOTES

INTERIM SUPPLY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We have a deferred vote on the motion by Mr. Bradley for interim supply for the period April 1, 2013, to September 30, 2013.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1144 to 1149.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): On March 19, Mr. Bradley moved government notice of motion number 1. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Brotan, Laurel C.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Fife, Catherine

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwintar, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Paul
Milloy, John

Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield

Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.

Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Rod

McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John

Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakubski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 62; the nays are 34.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1154 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It is my pleasure to rise here this afternoon to draw attention to the date March 31, 2013, which is only 11 days away.

March 31 is the date that the Kathleen Wynne Liberal government decided to arbitrarily end the successful slots-at-racetracks partnership and, without any consultations or warning, decided to pull the rug out from a successful industry and the over 60,000 hard-working men and women who are part of it. This is why I am proud that Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC Party are the only party to put forward a solid and comprehensive plan to grow and develop Ontario's horse racing industry.

So far, we have heard overwhelmingly positive feedback on our proposal to give racetrack operators an opportunity to buy existing slots operations at fair market value to help save their industry and provide a good return to Ontario taxpayers.

It's simple, really: Horse racing must be a key component of Ontario's overall gaming strategy. The government should cancel the OLG's plan to abandon racetrack slots and scrap their plan to build 29 new casinos. Instead, Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC Party will build partnerships with the horse racing industry, allowing it to survive.

NORTHERN ONTARIANS

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm thrilled to stand up today on behalf of the constituents of Algoma-Manitowin and across northern Ontario to congratulate skip Brad Jacobs and the northern Ontario curling team from Sault Ste. Marie on capturing the Brier title.

In a tremendous display of perseverance and dedication, skip Jacobs, third Ryan Fry, second E.J. Harnden and lead Ryan Harnden conquered a tough field at the 2013 Brier in Edmonton, defeating Manitoba in the finals to win the Canadian title.

Northern Ontarians are ecstatic to know they will have the opportunity to welcome the tankard, aka the cup,

back home for the first time in 28 years. We will be cheering these young men on from home as they represent Canada at the World Men's Curling Championship in Victoria, BC, from March 30 to April 7.

I would also like to congratulate another impressive northerner, whose perseverance and talent brought her to one of the final rounds of a national competition. Elliot Lake's own singer-songwriter Kori Rowe pushed through to the top 20 round of the CBC Searchlight contest. She made northeastern Ontario proud, and we look forward to following the future endeavours of this talented young lady.

To Kori on behalf of myself, I expect an autographed copy of your album when it goes platinum.

CHILDREN'S TREATMENT CENTRES

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, ErinoakKids Centre for Treatment and Development is the largest children's treatment centre in Ontario.

In 2011, Mississauga MPPs and ErinoakKids announced funding for three new state-of-the-art facilities to treat kids with learning and physical challenges, one each serving Brampton, Mississauga and Oakville. After years of work, the ErinoakKids Foundation has raised its local share for the capital costs of the project. ErinoakKids is selecting the firms to design and build the facilities and will announce the location of the Mississauga facility later this spring.

The new facilities will be open by early 2017. From serving 58 children when Erinoak first opened in 1978, ErinoakKids is now Ontario's largest children's treatment centre. Today, it serves more than 12,500 children with disabilities each year in Dufferin county, Brampton, Mississauga and Oakville.

Families and donors in western Mississauga have worked hard to earn the new state-of-the-art facilities to help ErinoakKids make a difference each day in the lives of autistic and learning-challenged children.

As elected representatives, we measure our success in how we can improve the lives of the young and those who need help. ErinoakKids is one solid accomplishment for Ontario and for our Brampton, Mississauga and Oakville communities.

ALGONQUIN LAND CLAIM

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My constituents are concerned with the consultation process this government is undertaking with regard to the Algonquin land claim. Negotiations have been ongoing since 1991, yet the first time MPPs, mayors, the public and the Algonquins themselves were able to look at the map of the proposed settlement was just this past December 13.

Since then, I have met with hundreds of stakeholders, including residents, family members of the historic owners of Camp Island, and Chief Bastien. By far the biggest complaint is the lack of consultation.

Public meetings were scheduled on March 12 in North Bay and March 13 in Mattawa, right in the middle of the

March break, when many people were away. These can best be characterized as a dog-and-pony show and were not the serious consultations the public deserves. I made a short presentation to the negotiating team on the feedback I have been receiving.

Settlement of the Algonquin land claim will impact us for generations to come, and it is critical it be executed properly. This Liberal government may want to silence its critics, but I pledge today that we will be heard.

Speaker, I will also be reading a petition a little later on today that includes several hundred signatures from people I met with in my office continually over their concern about the lack of consultation. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this.

TRINITY-ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Built in 1889, Trinity-St. Paul's United Church, at the corner of Bloor and Spadina in my riding of Trinity-Spadina, is celebrating 125 years of service, community and worship.

To mark the occasion, Trinity-St. Paul's is embarking on a \$3.3-million revitalization project that will result in major improvements to the historic building and will expand the ways in which it serves the community. The renovated space, together with existing meeting rooms, studios, gym and kitchens, will ensure that our community has one of the most beautiful, comfortable and versatile centres for faith, justice and the arts in our community.

Trinity-St. Paul's plays a vital role in the economic and cultural health of our community and is home to several user groups, such as the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and Chamber Choir, the Toronto Consort, the Toronto Health Coalition, Dancing With Parkinson's, and many educational and justice organizations.

Current and past congregation members, friends and community members who see the value and promise of this work are urged to make a pledge to this project. For more information, visit www.trinitystpauls.ca.

I would like to wish Trinity-St. Paul's United Church another 125 years of dedicated service at the heart of our community.

CYRIL SAHADATH

Mr. Joe Dickson: Ajax, Durham region and the track-and-field community mourn the loss of long-time teacher, coach and mentor Cyril Sahadath, who passed away suddenly and unexpectedly on Monday of this week.

An institution at Pickering High School—my old alma mater—where he has been the head of the special education department, Coach guided the Pickering High Trojans to 13 Ontario high school track-and-field championships during his 25 years as a teacher/mentor at PHS while playing an integral role in the lives of several generations of students. A fixture in the Durham athletic community as well, Sahadath also coached the Durham X-L's Track Club.

He was more than a coach to the students of Pickering High School. Many regarded him as an inspiration and a father figure who motivated them with a timely word of advice or a powerful kick in the pants—whatever was needed to help them succeed not only on the track but also in life. In fact, many of his past students shared a special bond with their own children, taking pride as they watched Sahadath continue his work with subsequent generations of our community's youth.

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The coach also inspired others to the point of following his lead and becoming teachers and coaches themselves and sharing the lessons he first taught them.

I can tell you that he was just something special. Generations of people were not only proud to call him "Coach" but privileged to call him "friend." May he rest in peace.

GREAT AMAZING DUCK RACE

Mrs. Julia Munro: I would like to thank and congratulate Patti Thompson and King Cole Ducks in Newmarket for hosting the Great Amazing Duck Race, which took place on March 16.

The contest for culinary students was a farm-to-fork competition where students learned about fresh-farmed ducks and were put through a series of culinary challenges, travelling throughout the day from York region to downtown Toronto for the various competitions. The event brought together teams from North Bay, London, Toronto, Peterborough, Niagara, Kingston, Belleville and Kitchener.

I'd like to congratulate Bianca Aversa and Jonathon Williams from the Niagara College wine and culinary institute on their winning duck appetizer and entrée.

King Cole has 14 farms throughout York region and is a third-generation family-run business. The company has over 140 staff on 14 farms that total 1,200 acres.

Through hosting the Great Amazing Duck Race event, King Cole Ducks has provided a fun and competitive learning environment for up-and-coming chefs, bringing together culinary students from around Ontario.

ROD JERRED

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's with sadness that I rise in the House today to pay tribute to Rod Jerred. Rod was the ultimate community newspaperman. He graduated from Sheridan College and went on to a 30-year career with Metroland Media Group. He worked for community newspapers in Milton, Burlington and, most recently, Hamilton. But it was his work in my community of Oakville at the Oakville Beaver where Rod's impact was felt the most throughout his career. Rod's work at the Beaver led to numerous accolades, including the newspaper being named best overall newspaper in Ontario for four years in a row.

Since his recent passing, a number of people have honoured Rod's contributions. Jill Davis, Metroland's

editor-in-chief for Halton, recently wrote that Rod had an “undeniable passion for community journalism [that] was evident in everything that he did. His dedication to the craft was unrivalled.”

Many have credited Rod’s belief that his role in every issue of the newspaper was to connect people with their community as what caused the success Rod had. Rod connected many. He was never afraid to give a voice to those in need.

My deepest sympathies go out today to his family, his friends and to those in the Metroland community that Rod worked with. He certainly will be missed by all of us in Oakville and, through the newspaper craft, right throughout Ontario.

SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION

Mr. John O’Toole: Today I present a comprehensive report compiled by the parents of the Cartwright secondary school community. The report calls into question the decision by the Durham District School Board and the entire accommodation review process.

Some citizens are concerned that the accommodation review committee was not using the best facts and figures about topics such as student outcomes, teacher allocation, condition of the building and its systems, and enrolment projections. I can also say that a review of the information available to the accommodation review committee would ensure that the school board hadn’t made the wrong decision.

Cartwright has an outstanding record of excellence in student achievement, school spirit and close community ties. This is why the community wants the school kept open.

I congratulate the entire community. Cartwright is known as “the little school with the big heart.” Over 800 citizens have signed a petition—I’ll be presenting this later—to keep the school open. I’d like to thank John and Theresa Eccelston, Tony Gledhill, Stephen Evans, Craig Larmer, Patti Alpe, Claire Marsh—who wrote an extensive letter—Wilma Wotten, Joyce Kelly and other advocates and leaders within the community, including the mayor and council.

This is a wrong-headed decision, and I call on Ms. Sandals to reverse this decision immediately and keep the school open.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise on a point of order. I would like to clarify my earlier comments at question period this morning on the discussion surrounding the Oakville power plant relocation.

The memorandum of understanding from September 24, 2012, was signed between TransCanada energy, the Ontario Power Authority and the government of Ontario. The government of Ontario was involved in the discussions and was aware of the contents of the MOU signed by all parties and made public. I simply wanted to con-

firm that the government of Ontario relied on the expertise of the OPA in the course of those discussions.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr5, An Act to revive Terra Paving Inc.

Bill Pr11, An Act respecting The Royal Conservatory of Music

Bill Pr12, An Act to revive Universal Health Consulting Inc.

Bill Pr14, An Act to revive Aspen Drywall Inc.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to amend the French Language Services Act with respect to the French Language Services Commissioner’s reporting requirements / *Projet de loi 31, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français en ce qui concerne les rapports exigés du commissaire aux services en français.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Does the member wish to make a statement?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Absolutely. I thought you would never ask.

En ce moment, le commissaire aux services en français, l’excellent M. François Boileau, relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français. Le projet de loi va changer la redevabilité pour qu’il relève de l’Assemblée législative directement.

Currently, the French-Language Services Act requires the French language services commissioner to submit annual or special reports to the minister responsible for francophone affairs. The bill amends the act to require that these reports be submitted to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): My apologies, but I was asking a question of the table.

Shall Ms. Gélinas’s motion carry? Agreed? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

REGISTERED HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES PROFESSIONNELS EN RESSOURCES HUMAINES INSCRITS

Mr. Dhillon moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 32, An Act respecting the Human Resources Professionals Association / Projet de loi 32, Loi concernant l'Association des professionnels en ressources humaines.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm reintroducing An Act respecting the Human Resources Professionals Association, which was introduced in the last Parliament. This bill updates HRP's existing self-regulation act of 1990 for the 20,000 HR professional members of HRP here in Ontario.

This bill creates a modern professional regulation statute for HRP and its members. It addresses many of the gaps found in the current private statute. It enhances public protection, strengthening the ability of HRP to effectively provide the regulatory oversight that it needs to meet the demands of its members and businesses in Ontario.

I feel strongly that this is a win-win situation for businesses and for the protection of the public.

SUPPLY ACT, 2013

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2013

Mr. Milloy, on behalf of Mr. Sousa, moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013 / Projet de loi 33, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2013.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Does the government House leader wish to make a statement?

Hon. John Milloy: I have no statement at this time, Mr. Speaker.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE CODE DE LA ROUTE

Mr. Murray moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of permit denials and out-of-province service and evidence in certain proceedings and to make a con-

sequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act / Projet de loi 34, Loi visant à modifier le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les refus relatifs aux certificats d'immatriculation et la signification et les preuves extraprovinciales dans certaines instances, et à apporter une modification corrélative à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Does the minister wish to make a short statement?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I will make my statement during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LA FRANCOPHONIE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ministerial statements? The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: And minister for francophone affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): And minister for francophone affairs.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, j'aimerais tout d'abord souhaiter la bienvenue à deux invités spéciaux du journal *Le Droit*: M. Jacques Pronovost, le président et éditeur du journal, and M. Jean Gagnon, le rédacteur en chef. Ils sont ici pour une occasion bien spéciale et j'aurai le plaisir d'élaborer sur ce point dans quelques instants.

Nous célébrons aujourd'hui la Journée internationale de la Francophonie en Ontario, au Canada et partout dans le monde. Cette année, l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie a retenu un thème qui dit que « le français, c'est une chance » parce que le français, dans le monde, nourrit la solidarité et le dialogue interculturel.

C'est tellement vrai ici en Ontario.

Un des plus beaux exemples de cette solidarité entre francophones et francophiles en Ontario est l'objet d'une célébration historique cette année qui mérite d'être soulignée devant cette Assemblée: le 100^e anniversaire du journal *Le Droit* qui, contre vents et marées, a démontré l'importance de la solidarité et de la justice sociale.

Today, on the International Day of La Francophonie, I am very honoured to be able to highlight the transformative contribution that the only daily French-language newspaper has had in Ontario.

Le Droit a vu le jour le 27 mars 1913, en réaction au Règlement 17, qui interdisait l'enseignement en français dans les écoles de la province. Il n'en fallait pas plus pour mobiliser les parents, les leaders francophones et les religieux contre ce règlement qui menaçait la survie

même d'un peuple fier de sa langue et de sa culture, d'un peuple qui désirait participer de façon active à l'essor de la province.

Dès le départ, la devise du Droit disait que « l'avenir appartient à ceux qui luttent », une attestation quasiment prophétique de la vocation qu'allait se donner ce journal d'influence tout au long des dernières 100 années. Le Droit, dès sa fondation, est devenu un catalyseur de la communauté francophone en Ontario.

Plus qu'un simple outil de communication, Le Droit s'est transformé en un carrefour de réflexion, un lieu d'échanges et une source de mobilisation communautaire sans pareil.

La première victoire—celle de faire cesser l'application du Règlement 17—fut difficile mais combien gratifiante.

Back then, thanks to the support of this young newspaper with limited resources, the government of the day would finally stop imposing mandatory instruction only in English on francophone children. Of course, a victory like that gives you wings, but it also gives you a greater responsibility.

Voici ce que Le Droit a su faire :

Le Droit a rapidement su rencontrer les nouveaux défis confirmant son rôle central dans le développement et la reconnaissance de la francophonie ontarienne.

Le Droit a graduellement augmenté son tirage et amélioré son contenu éditorial en élargissant son champ de réflexion.

Le Droit a épousé d'autres causes touchant à l'identité franco-ontarienne comme celle de la responsabilité du gouvernement dans l'appui aux communautés minoritaires fondatrices du Canada.

Le Droit a fait la promotion de la dualité linguistique et de l'importance du développement culturel en français, en Ontario, par la publication des oeuvres d'ici ou encore la promotion de la vitalité de nos artistes, interprètes et producteurs.

Plus tard, Le Droit a été, encore une fois, un leader de premier plan dans la lutte pour la sauvegarde de l'Hôpital Montfort et l'augmentation des soins de santé en français. Et on sait aujourd'hui à quel point il a contribué à cette avancée symbolique et bien concrète.

1530

Le journal Le Droit, c'est également une entreprise bien de chez nous qui appuie le développement économique d'Ottawa et de l'Ontario français.

Le Droit est un fier partenaire, toujours présent dans les activités du milieu des affaires, et je veux aujourd'hui remercier l'équipe du Droit, qui est ici, en partie pour cette présence dans tous les secteurs de la vie française en Ontario.

Le Droit est également un leader médiatique qui favorise les nouveaux médias en travaillant de près, par exemple, avec la Télévision française de l'Ontario. De ce fait, il s'est aussi engagé à s'adapter aux nouvelles technologies et à se transformer et à se réinventer.

Je n'hésite pas à dire que nous n'aurions probablement pas réussi à faire connaître et respecter nos droits à l'éducation, aux soins de santé, à la justice, au

développement culturel, à la prospérité économique et aux services publics en français sans le journal Le Droit.

Ce qui m'amène à paraphraser le thème de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie qui dit que « le français est une chance » en Ontario, pour dire que nous avons également la chance d'avoir Le Droit pour protéger et promouvoir le français dans notre province.

My dear colleagues, I am sure you understand that celebrating la Francophonie is much more than just celebrating a language, a culture, or a branch of the media.

Celebrating la Francophonie means recognizing the key role that individuals, organizations and businesses like Le Droit have played in the development of the entire province of Ontario.

C'est aussi une question de solidarité et de dialogue interculturel parce que tant de nouveaux arrivants choisissent l'Ontario pour y vivre et progresser en français.

Notre première ministre, M^{me} Wynne, est une leader qui a toujours démontré par ses actions que le français, c'est effectivement une chance en Ontario, un atout indéniable, une force vive et un outil de développement exceptionnel. Le nouveau gouvernement de l'Ontario va donc continuer d'appuyer les francophones avec conviction.

Once again, this year, to celebrate the International Day of la Francophonie, a number of activities and events have been organized across the country and the region in our ridings to highlight the contribution of French language and culture in Ontario. I invite you all to participate actively in these events. Your presence alone will be worth a thousand words.

Le dialogue interculturel demeure un défi de taille partout dans le monde. Je souhaite donc que l'Ontario puisse continuer d'être un modèle unique et inspirant pour démontrer au monde entier que la reconnaissance de sa communauté francophone, combinée à la valorisation de sa diversité culturelle, est une source d'harmonie, de développement et de prospérité pour tous et toutes.

Je souhaite à tous une bonne Journée de la Francophonie et je souhaite au journal Le Droit un bon 100^e anniversaire.

Merci.

ROAD SAFETY

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Just before I get into the statement, I am joined by representatives today from the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards and governance in Ontario. I'd like to thank them for preparing the white paper, which was an important foundational document in the legislation I am about to introduce, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in the House today to deliver on a promise that will support Ontario's municipalities and help keep Ontario the North American leader in road safety. Municipalities from the north, south, east and west have asked for our help to collect outstanding unpaid fines. They

need our help to collect millions of dollars in revenue owed to them. We are committed to working diligently with our municipal partners to help them collect money owed to them from drivers who break the law.

If passed, this legislation will target drivers who don't pay their fines. They will have their licence plates denied at renewal time, and we will make it harder for drivers who break the rules of the road to drive on our roads. It will target offences under the Highway Traffic Act and the Compulsory Automobile Insurance Act—offences that put the safety of all road users at risk, such as speeding, illegal turns, improper lane changes, driving with no insurance and careless driving. We will also make it easier for municipalities to change and prosecute out-of-province drivers who run red lights and are caught by red-light cameras and who fail to stop for school buses.

We recognize the challenges municipalities are faced with in this time of fiscal restraint, Mr. Speaker. An estimated \$315 million is owed to municipalities from unpaid fines related to Highway Traffic Act offences, and an additional \$354 million in unpaid fines is owed under the CAIA, so \$669 million in these defaulted fines are owed to municipalities. These changes, if passed, will give municipalities more power to collect those funds, funds that municipalities can use to reinvest in their communities to enhance life for the hard-working families in those communities.

If passed, every 1% increase in the rate of collection brought about by these changes can mean an additional \$2.5 million in revenue for municipalities every year. This could mean better roads, libraries or improved services. It will certainly have an effect on the up to 75% of suspended drivers who continue to drive despite their disqualifications, because drivers who choose to drive while suspended with expired validation tags would be more easily identifiable to police.

Unsafe drivers have no place on Ontario's roads. Ontario is the North American leader in road safety, and we are committed to keeping our roads safe, just as we committed to our municipalities that we would help them collect money owed to them, because the people of Ontario deserve no less.

I urge all members of the House to support this legislation. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Responses?

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M. Peter Shurman: Je suis ravi de me lever dans l'Assemblée aujourd'hui pour rendre hommage aux Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes pour la célébration du 15^e anniversaire de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

La présence française en Ontario remonte à presque 400 ans, en 1610, avec l'exploration d'Étienne Brûlé.

Je veux prendre cette opportunité pour ajouter mes félicitations au journal quotidien *Le Droit*.

On behalf of Tim Hudak and the entire PC caucus, I am happy to recognize the deeply rooted history that the French-speaking community has in Ontario and, notably, the great newspaper that serves it, *Le Droit*.

The importance of preserving our French heritage goes beyond our dual languages. In Ontario, we have taken important measures to ensure that our history is never forgotten. Half a billion francophones around the world will be celebrating the 15th annual International Day of La Francophonie today to celebrate their common bond, the French language, as well as their diversity.

Le français est une langue officielle dans 33 pays et cinq continents. Dans le monde entier, après l'anglais, le français est la langue secondaire la plus étudiée.

The PC caucus has always been instrumental in promoting the vital role that our French-speaking population has played and continues to play in creating and building our nation.

Le dynamisme de la communauté francophone que nous voyons aujourd'hui confirme que la langue et la culture françaises demeurent une partie intégrante et fondamentale de la société ontarienne.

Je souhaite des célébrations mémorables à tous les francophones. J'offre un accueil spécial du Parti PC aux invités du journal *Le Droit* à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario. Félicitations et merci.

1540

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to speak to the municipal fine collection amendment act—I may not have that quite right. I rise in response to the transportation and infrastructure minister's statement to introduce a new government bill regarding new tools to collect unpaid driving-related fines.

Basically, this act will allow licence plate denial as well as existing licence suspension to be used for leverage to recover unpaid fines. We are told that the total fines not collected in the last 40 years are \$954 million. It's a significant number.

This bill will enable tickets given out for red-light cameras and failure to stop for school bus offences to be sent to out-of-province drivers but still not force them to pay. That would especially affect people from Quebec who come across to Ottawa and aren't paying the fines.

The government is looking for money and is again focusing on people who cannot pay more. We are in difficult times, with a rising cost of living and high unemployment, so we have to be aware of that. Even though governments—municipal governments in this case—are keen to have more money, we have to be aware of the effect it will have on the people who live in this community. There are many people across the province who are unemployed; there are 600,000 people out of work. While we do not support letting people off the hook for unpaid fines, we feel that the timing of this bill is unfortunate. I know the government could be doing so much more to solve the jobs-and-debt crisis.

If this bill must pass at this time, we must make sure that its effect is not retroactive. There is a will to go back as far as 40 years. That would create undue hardship in the extreme for a lot of people, and that would not be a moral thing to do or a correct thing. It would have to become effective as of the day it passes and not be retroactive to the past. That is disrespectful of people and it's just not fair for people who have fines from before. We cannot disrespect citizens by going back into the past and changing the rules.

It would be reasonable if this bill took effect on unpaid fines in the future, and I implore the government to be fair and to make this change.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Cindy Forster: While we support the idea behind this bill, we should be collecting unpaid fines for road and traffic violations, but not only for the purpose of increasing government revenue, but to provide incentives for drivers to not speed, to not violate traffic laws, and hopefully to make our roads safer to drive on—and, at the end of the day, to save lives.

Municipalities, however, are starving for revenues. We've had major manufacturing job losses across this province: 600,000 people out of work, and that certainly has impacted taxes for municipalities. Between 1999 and 2002, the provincial offences program was downloaded to municipalities. Many of them weren't prepared for this download—this was under the Tory government—and, due to limited resources, many POA courts have just abandoned collecting these outstanding fines because they don't have the actual resources, the physical resources, to collect them.

In my own area in the Niagara Peninsula there are 1,100 delinquent cases added every month in Niagara. There are about \$2 million in 2010 outstanding, just in the Niagara region.

So I think that we need to do more about collecting these, but I think we also have to be cognizant of the fact that there are people out of work. There have to be some ways to enter into payment agreements with people who have outstanding fines, particularly those who need their vehicles in their job. We can't be taking people's licences away and taking away from their livelihood and their ability to support their families.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait tellement plaisir de souligner la Journée internationale de la Francophonie, qu'on appelle un rendez-vous incontournable des amoureux de la langue française.

J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue aux représentants du journal *Le Droit*. Félicitations pour vos 100 ans. C'est toute une célébration.

Une petite parenthèse : ici, les députés reçoivent les coupures de journaux, mais on ne reçoit pas les coupures du journal *Le Droit*, donc j'espère que ça ne nous prendra

pas 100 ans avant que le journal *Le Droit* soit rajouté aux coupures de journaux que les députés reçoivent.

Ma collègue du Niagara vit dans une région désignée, une région désignée où le gouvernement fédéral est capable d'offrir des services en français, mais lorsque tu regardes du côté provincial, bien, il n'y en a pas. Des services de santé en français dans Niagara, il n'y en a pas. On nous ressort des excuses qui goûtent un peu les restants réchauffés, mais sans aucune bonne raison. On sait tous que ça commence par la désignation.

On a reçu aujourd'hui un beau courriel de M^{me} Laura Lutoto, qui est avec l'ACFO de Durham-Peterborough. Ça fait longtemps, eux, qu'ils attendent pour avoir une région désignée, et ils attendent toujours pour que la région soit désignée. Il y a des choses qu'on pourrait faire pour rendre la vie des francophones un peu plus facile.

Aujourd'hui, j'ai redéposé pour la troisième fois—peut-être que ça va être la fois chanceuse—mon projet de loi pour donner au commissaire aux services en français le droit de relever directement de l'Assemblée législative. En ce moment, M. François Boileau, excellent de bon commissaire, relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français. Il n'y a eu aucun problème. Ce n'est pas parce que la ministre n'a pas bien fait son travail—loin de là—mais c'est vraiment pour assurer la pérennité du poste. Le commissaire à l'environnement, le commissaire à l'intégrité, le commissaire à l'information et la protection de la vie privée—tous ces commissaires relèvent directement de l'Assemblée législative.

Je crois qu'en 2013, après les excellents rapports que le commissaire a faits—dans son dernier rapport, entre autres, il dit ouvertement qu'il est temps que les pouvoirs du commissaire soient augmentés afin qu'ils relèvent directement de l'Assemblée. J'espère qu'en ce renouveau de Parlement minoritaire, on verra une collaboration au niveau des services en français également. Ça me ferait extrêmement plaisir et je pense que ce serait un pas de bonne volonté pour démontrer l'importance des services en français.

Encore une fois, félicitations au journal *Le Droit*. On a toujours des petites compétitions avec *Le Nord*, mais on admire beaucoup ce que vous faites dans l'Est avec *Le Droit*. Merci.

PETITIONS

ALGONQUIN LAND CLAIM

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are serious concerns with the process leading to the current agreement in principle (AIP) between the AOO, the government of Ontario and the government of Canada, as well as with the selection of certain lands to be transferred to the AOO;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to do the following:

“(1) Amend the AIP to include protection of the public interest as it is apparent from the AIP that the province did ensure that its own corporate interests were protected, however, there is no indication that any effort was made to protect the public interest or that it was considered in any balanced fashion;

“(2) Retain Camp Island (as identified by parcel 83-F3) as crown land for public use and that it not be transferred to the AOO as the island has a long history of private ownership and was sold to the crown in 1970 for \$5 only after assurances were given that it would remain in its natural state and be for public use, and the crown would be breaking those assurances and breaching the public trust if the island was transferred to the AOO as the island would then become private land for the enjoyment of few; and

“(3) Ensure Mattawa River Provincial Park (MRPP) remain as crown land for public use and not be transferred to the AOO as the park was created in 1970 and expanded in 1999 in recognition of its historical, cultural, recreational and ecological significance under Ontario's Living Legacy Lands for Life initiative, and any development in the park would create a severe ecological and environmental disturbance to the area and exclude a very large community of local, provincial, national and international visitors from experiencing the uniqueness of this area.”

Mr. Speaker, I join hundreds of signers of this petition by signing my name and handing it to page Megalie.

1550

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai cette pétition qui me vient de partout en Ontario.

« Attendu que la mission du commissaire aux services en français est de veiller à ce que la population reçoive, en français, des services de qualité du gouvernement de l'Ontario et de surveiller l'application de la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que le commissaire a le mandat de mener des enquêtes indépendantes selon la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que contrairement au vérificateur général, à l'ombudsman, au commissaire à l'environnement et au commissaire à l'intégrité qui, eux, relèvent de l'Assemblée législative, le commissaire aux services en français relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français. »

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative « de changer les pouvoirs du commissaire aux services en français afin qu'il relève directement de l'Assemblée législative. »

J'appuie cette pétition; je vais y apposer ma signature et je demande à Emily de l'amener aux greffiers.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas the NDP member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton has put forward a plan for auto insurance that would dramatically drive up rates for drivers throughout northern Ontario. According to one estimate, drivers in northwestern Ontario could expect to pay 38.8% more in insurance premiums if the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton's proposal is adopted;

“Whereas Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada has said, ‘In essence, the bill would force responsible drivers to subsidize the insurance premiums of dangerous drivers’;

“Whereas the leader of the third party and the other NDP members of the Legislature have made it clear that they continue to support the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton's proposal for auto insurance reform;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To make it clear that the Legislature does not support the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton's proposal to change auto insurance in Ontario.”

I support this; I'll affix my signature to it and give it to Fae.

AIR QUALITY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for that consideration.

My petition, from the riding of Durham, reads as follows:

“Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

“Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

“Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

“Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year,” especially when it's not raining;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced” rigorously “by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks.”

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of one of my constituents, Dan Dale, who is from Port Stanley. I present it to one of the new pages here, Brittany, and I support this petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Cindy Forster: A petition:

“Re: Dr. Kevin Smith’s Niagara Health System report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care proposed changes to the hospital services in south Niagara.

“Whereas the residents of south Niagara will not have equal, fair, safe and timely access to in-patient gynecological, obstetrical and pediatric services due to distance; and

“Whereas excessive travel times and lack of public transportation for residents in south Niagara will put patient safety at risk; and

“Whereas, if implemented, Dr. Smith’s recommendations and the proposed location of a new south Niagara hospital in Niagara Falls is approved, a two-tier health system in Niagara will be created, where north Niagara will be overserved and south Niagara will be underserved in relation to the safe and timely access to health and hospital care; and

“Whereas, if hospital services including in-patient gynecological and mental health, and all obstetrical and pediatric services from the Welland hospital site and the Greater Niagara hospital site will be relocated to the new north Niagara St. Catharines site in 2013, it will undermine the continued viability of these two sites as full-service hospital sites;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to maintain existing services at the Welland hospital site and the Niagara Falls hospital site and that no services are to be moved until this new south Niagara hospital is open and request that any approval for a new Niagara south hospital include a site that is centrally located in Welland.”

I support this petition, affix my signature and will present it to Helen, one of the new pages.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have been presented a petition this week at the rally outside of Queen’s Park. I have approximately 500 to 600 names, primarily from the Ajax-Pickering area, and I wish to present it to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas in Ontario, abortion is a service covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP), paying for more than 32,000 abortions at hospitals and private abortion facilities, at a cost to taxpayers of at least \$30 million per year; and

“Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness; and abortion is not a medical necessity ...;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To cease providing taxpayers’ dollars for the performance of abortions by passing legislation to remove

abortion as a service covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan.”

I will attach my name to it and pass it to page Nadim.

LONG-TERM CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Petitions? The member from Sudbury—Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: That was quick, Mr. Speaker; that was really quick.

“Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

“Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don’t complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

“Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman’s mandate to include Ontario’s long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask Helen to bring it to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 27, 2013, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kenora—Rainy River will take control.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I must say that I am pleased to be able to finish the second half of my response to the speech from the throne. During my first half I discussed the strong feelings of alienation that northerners are feeling as a result of the government ignoring us over the past almost 20 years.

I’d like to start off by mentioning one area which is very relevant right now; it’s a timely area where we need this government to act. That is to save the Experimental Lakes Area in my riding. This centre is the only one of its kind in the world. It promotes not only research, but innovations that benefit industry as well as science. It is this type of facility that we should not only be proud of, but that this government should fight to keep operating.

We are discussing here today the speech from the throne that mentions research, innovation, opportunity and making Ontario a world-class place to do business, so how can we as a government stand idly by and watch

one of the few areas where we are a leader be slowly dismantled by the federal government—a government that lacks vision, fears science and does its best to muzzle those who speak against it? I would like to take this opportunity to thank my federal counterparts, who are right now debating an opposition day motion that would prevent its closure. This fight is a partnership, and has involved members of the NDP, the Liberals, the Greens and independent members. We need this government to stand up and take real action to join the fight.

In Ontario, we have a new Premier, and she is aware of this issue. She needs to give the direction today, take a strong stance and stand up for this facility, for it is a facility that each and every one of us in this House should be proud of.

When the Liberals chose a new leader, they had an opportunity for change. We have a Premier who has heard plenty of northern voices stating that the direction this government has taken is wrong, but this throne speech does little to address the concerns that we have raised. We have a province where the south is happy to use our resources and exploit our mineral wealth, and it doesn't seem to matter if we in the north benefit or not. That's what we've seen in this government, and it's not the type of leadership that we're looking for.

1600

The Ring of Fire has vast potential to put hundreds of millions of dollars into our northern economy. It has the potential to benefit First Nations on whose land these resources exist. It can bring an end to the cycle of hopelessness and despair that has haunted many communities in northern Ontario. But we fail to see any sort of plan, any desire to compromise, any willingness to work with First Nation communities and municipalities in our region in the northwest to bring jobs and prosperity to our region.

Rather than consult, this government, including then-Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and current Premier Kathleen Wynne, has made backroom deals with some mining companies, some of which have had little concern for the opinions or views of those who live on the land that they hope to mine. They make the deals, and once everything is signed, sealed and delivered, they say, "Okay, it's time to consult."

In committee last fall, I raised this very issue with the Premier, who was then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. She seemed to think that this is a perfectly okay way of doing business. Whether it's signing deals to extract the wealth of the Ring of Fire or announcing the twinning of Highway 17 outside of Kenora, this government has repeatedly failed to honour not only the treaties that were made on a government-to-government basis with First Nations but northerners in general.

In Shoal Lake, for instance, the government went as far as drawing up plans, wasting taxpayers' dollars and announcing the plans publicly, expecting that the road from Shoal Lake through their traditional territory wouldn't be a problem. When they found out it might be a problem, did they then honour the treaty? No, they

didn't. They sent bureaucrats who had no power to make decisions or commitments to the table. Those bureaucrats made promises and came back and said, "Oops, sorry. I guess we didn't have the power to make those decisions." The question is: How bad did the then minister and now Premier mess things up? I have been told by the community of Shoal Lake that she messed things up to the point that Shoal Lake 39 would no longer talk to her ministry, to the point that they would only discuss this issue directly with the then Premier.

Meanwhile, what have we got? We've got people in Kenora and the surrounding area who are left wondering where the twinning is. After all, the money was dedicated, or so we were told; shouldn't there be some kind of progress or construction? Again, it points to Premier Wynne's view of consultation.

This past September, in the estimates committee when I asked the then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, now Premier Kathleen Wynne, about what was going on, she said, "My understanding is that the conversation has been on a trajectory towards an action plan. Once that action plan is in place, if there are decision points, obviously I'd be happy to sit down with the community. I'd meet with the chief—whatever. I offered that to him. I said that I would meet with him. But unless there are decisions to be made, if it's still in the stage of trying to sort out what the way forward will be, then there isn't as much of a role."

So I said, "I think that's maybe where" our opinions and "our interpretations of the treaty" diverge, because "my interpretation is that the crown should be meeting directly."

Then she said, "But the government is—sorry, I just have to be clear. To suggest that the crown is not meeting, that the government is not meeting, when bureaucrats, when employees of the government are meeting on my behalf ... to suggest that that is not the crown meeting with the community, I think that's a difficult contention."

Then she suggested that it's not practical for the minister to meet with the community and engage in consultation from the beginning. So not only did the minister put the cart before the horse; she failed to ensure that there is even a path to get where she wanted to go.

Maybe that's why there's no significant mention of this government's plan for First Nations in the throne speech. The only mention is that this government intends to pressure the federal government to do the right thing. But maybe, before they do that, they should try doing the right thing themselves, rather than thinking of First Nations and all northerners as an inconvenient afterthought.

As I've said, our expectations in the north are very straightforward. We want to be able to live, work and retire in the region we love. We want input on the decisions that directly affect us. We want to know that if we work our entire lives, we can continue to live in the communities where we raised our families. That, unfortunately, is becoming less common.

This speech from the throne does nothing to alleviate those concerns. Seniors across the north are finding it

increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Many have had their pensions, which they worked hard for, gutted, with no protection from the provincial or federal governments. They worked hard their entire lives and were promised a certain standard of living in return for that work, but governments stood idly by as employers made promises that they couldn't keep, guaranteeing income that they could not provide. When those companies told those who had retired already and who were counting on those fixed incomes that there was no money, the government stood idly by again and allowed it to happen.

In some cases, the provincial government has continued to reward companies that have gone bankrupt before and skipped out on their obligations. The first time pensions were decimated, this government should have acted, but time after time we have seen guaranteed incomes vanish into thin air, and the government has done nothing to help those individuals who have been affected.

Even worse, the government has rubbed salt in the wounds. Seniors and families across my riding are looking for action on hydro prices. The cost of electricity is artificially high as a result of government policy. Northerners are paying rates that do not even closely resemble the actual cost of generation. We generate some of the cleanest and cheapest electricity in North America, but our prices don't reflect that. The throne speech touches on hydro prices but doesn't say what, if anything, will be done. Families are unable to keep the lights on, and businesses have closed and are continuing to shut down because of the high price of hydro.

Since being elected, I have raised this issue. I have asked for a plan. All the throne speech is saying is, "We're aware of the problem." That falls dramatically short of the action we need.

But it's not just families who are having difficulty paying the bills; it's everyone. Businesses, even municipalities, cannot afford to operate in the conditions that have been created. Communities like Dryden, Ear Falls, Fort Frances and others are reeling from MPAC assessments that will force them to pay back money that is not only already spent; it was spent three years ago. Communities are not only looking at cutting staffing but cutting services that are in many ways essential, such as libraries.

We're facing a crisis now, and we need immediate action. This government needs to step up to the plate on so many issues, but this speech only brings vague acknowledgements that the problems exist. We want to see solutions, but time is running out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to speak on the throne speech, Mr. Speaker. We are making tremendous progress by working together right here in the province of Ontario. I appreciate the member from Kenora-Rainy River for her thoughtful insight, but I totally disagree with her. This government very much understands that only by working together can we move forward, and by working together we can prosper together, and by

working together we can all benefit. This government is committed to work with all communities, northern communities, aboriginal communities and all the municipalities, so I totally, totally disagree.

In the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, our new government laid out priorities. What are those priorities? Building a stronger and fairer Ontario, making the minority Parliament work, and making life a little easier for all of us so that we can all benefit.

This government is committed to eliminating the deficit by 2017-18. Now Ontario's deficit is \$3 billion lower than what it was projected in the last budget. This is the fourth year in a row that Ontario is ahead of its fiscal targets. This province has gained 411,000 jobs, and the job recovery pace has exceeded the United States and the United Kingdom. We are committed to work together, and we are not ignoring any community. We have invested \$50 million in capital venture funds so that businesses all across Ontario can benefit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I stand to talk for two minutes on the throne speech. The first part of my disappointment would be the fact that in those 17 pages there was one-half of one sentence devoted to northern Ontario. I'll repeat that, because it bears repetition. This is not half a book or half a page; it's one-half of one sentence that was devoted to northern Ontario.

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It brings to mind, of course, the budget of last year, as well—the budget that our party voted against—that talked about the fire sale of Ontario Northland. Speaker, I would tell you that in the budget, the then Minister of Finance, Dwight Duncan, suggested that the fire sale of Ontario Northland would save the province \$262 million. Since that time, I have successfully engaged the Auditor General to investigate the fire sale of Ontario Northland, and I expect that he will prove that not only are there no savings of \$262 million, but that it actually may end up costing that amount.

In the interim, I have asked our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, to hit the pause button on the sale of Ontario Northland so that we can wait for the Auditor General's report, but also so that we can do a strategic review of all of the assets of Ontario Northland. The letter that I got back said the Liberal government will be proceeding with the divestment, along with proceeding with the growth plan of northern Ontario, which, again, does not even mention Ontario Northland one time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just want to commend my colleague from Kenora-Rainy River for her true understanding of the issues that she's facing in her area—me, as well, from Algoma-Manitowlin. I feel the same pains, in particular with the communities, with the First Nations, whereas when issues come up, it's a secondary reaction. Instead of acting and being proactive on particular issues, we're reacting, and it becomes a nuisance:

"Oh, jeez, we forgot this step. Now we have to address it." Well, I'm sorry; we're going to do it now.

We should be looking at an inclusive method of how we're going to be doing this, and how we do that is really by setting our priorities straight here in this province. We really need to have a focus as far as, who are we going to be making decisions for? Who will be beneficial of the actions of this province?

It's very hard for me to talk to people in Algoma-Manitoulin in regard to how the respite beds for their loved ones are being cut in their families, how an 11-year-old girl who is clinging to life—how I have to explain to her, "Well, wait a second. The government is making decisions on not closing corporate tax loopholes because that's going to be beneficial to them to creating jobs." Where is the priority in this province? Where are we going to be putting our focus? We need to be getting results for those individuals. How is it that I'm going to be in a position to explain to this family that we have money, billions of dollars, to relocate gas plants or to deal with Ornge scandals when we can't deal with the everyday essentials that we need for community members? Even our municipalities, who are concerned and challenged as far as how they are going to maintain their roads and their bridges—how are they going to be able to sustain the services that they have?

Essentially, what I'm saying is that we need to take a clear direction as to where our priorities are in this province to bring the services that we need and the assistance to many in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased to stand and rise on this bill that is before us.

I have to tell you that the government will continue to balance its books. It's also a challenge to the people of Ontario to help the province motivate and grow.

Interjections.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I guess no one on the other side realizes that we are ahead of schedule in reducing the balance of the deficit, and we continue to do that on an ongoing basis.

I recently drove in northern Ontario, up to Sudbury, and I was quite impressed and very pleased with the amount of money that I saw. There were new bridges, refurbished bridges, new runoffs, extended runoffs, repavement of highways. I jokingly said to one of my northern Ontario colleagues, "Now I know why we've got gridlock in the GTA: because we've sent a lot of the money up north."

What has happened is—

Interjections.

Mr. Joe Dickson: All governments treat each area equally. That government, that government, this government treat everyone equally.

But I have to tell you that the largest problem we face in this country is a global recession of 82 years. Think about it. Think about the Prairies. They're still growing wheat. Think about BC. With the exception of the bug

they have in the forests, they're going full steam ahead. Think of the Maritimes: fishing, all the other services. Think of Newfoundland: fish, lumber, offshore oil—greater wealth than they've ever had.

The only province impacted is Ontario, and the reason is offshore competition worldwide.

I have a factory that produces goods. We pay people \$30 an hour if they're skilled production—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Joe Dickson: How do you compete—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Joe Dickson: —with China, India, Brazil—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I said "thank you" three times. The member will sit down when I stand up. I said it three times. It's good to pay attention to the Speaker. I'd appreciate that in the future. Thank you.

The member from Kenora-Rainy River has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker. You know what? If that comment was made to me when I was first elected, I may have found it kind of humorous, but that is not funny. That was so offensive to people living in the north who have to beg government after government just for pavement. We have so many roads that are not maintained.

You can talk to anybody in the north. One of the biggest problems we are battling this winter is a very grave, very serious issue, and that is basic maintenance of our main thoroughfares. We cannot get in and out of our communities. The number of fatalities we have had this winter alone just boggles the mind.

What I was intending to say here was that since we've come back, I've been fairly negative in my speeches, and I really don't like to take that position, because we have a tremendous opportunity before us right now with this minority government. With the economic opportunities we have across the north and across Ontario, we can get together and make some real progress on any number of the issues I raised here today. Northerners are getting increasingly frustrated. I don't know if you tuned in to the first half of my speech, but I talked about how we are feeling increasingly alienated. We're getting frustrated. We don't want to put up with it anymore.

Here, we have an opportunity where we can get together. We can make some real movement and some progress on these things, and we have the governing party that is completely unwilling to even meet us halfway.

Interjection: Totally out of touch.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: They are out of touch.

What would be nice is if the members opposite would listen to our concerns and then go one step further and help us address these concerns.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a real pleasure for me to stand up today in this House and deliver remarks very strongly in support of our government's throne speech. I

should also mention—I believe anyway; in fact, I know—that this is technically my maiden speech here in this hallowed chamber. It's a real privilege for me to have the opportunity to stand here among my colleagues and the members opposite to deliver some remarks in support of the throne speech but also to talk a little bit about why it's an honour to be a member of provincial Parliament and, in particular, an honour to represent the community that's as wonderful as the community of Vaughan.

As some of you—I think all of you—will know, I was elected back on September 6, the same date the member from Kitchener–Waterloo was elected. September 19 was the date of our swearing in, and that was a very important milestone in my life. It was a great day for me to be here, surrounded by all the members of this Legislature but, beyond that, to be surrounded by family, friends and supporters who were here filling the public galleries and the members' gallery to demonstrate their continued support for what I had undertaken as a successful candidate in Vaughan.

That day—and I say this as someone who used to work in this building for my predecessor, the former member of provincial Parliament for Vaughan, Mr. Sorbara—also demonstrated to me the very, very best this Legislature has to offer, in that as both myself and the member from Kitchener–Waterloo were marched into the chamber and introduced to the chamber for the very first time, we had the chance to be received so warmly by all 107, or 105, other members of this chamber with rousing applause. It was certainly something that I found to be a bit of an overwhelming experience, and I believe the member opposite from Kitchener–Waterloo would agree with that characterization.

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To be introduced into the chamber by my leader of the day, the Honourable Dalton McGuinty, and our House leader, the Honourable John Milloy, and to see my friends and family here to offer their continued support, was something that I know I will never forget. Specifically, on that day, there were some people who were here in the chamber, and every day that I come back into this building, every day that I come back into this House, I'm reminded of why I am here working as hard as I am. I believe that this is the kind of spirit that actually infuses every one of us who comes into this chamber. It certainly should. I'm referring, of course, to my wife, Utilia Amaral, and my two young daughters, Talia and Grace. They are not here today. They were here back on September 19. My daughter Talia is five years of age and Grace is two years of age.

Over the course of the last number of months, as I've been serving as the MPP for Vaughan, at all of the community events that I go to, I often reference the fact that I work as hard as I do—we all work as hard as we do, I believe—in this chamber to make sure that the future of this province is as bright for our children and for our grandchildren and for our neighbours' children and grandchildren as it has been for us. Certainly, over

my lifetime, my nearly 40 years of living here in this province of Ontario, I know how lucky and how fortunate I've been to have had the very best opportunities. I'm here and I work as hard as I do, and I love having this opportunity, because I want to make sure that in every way possible—economically, socially, whether it relates to their education or to their health care—my daughters have the same kind of future and the same kind of opportunities that I've had.

That day, on September 19, my parents, Margaret and Ben Del Duca, were here with us. For those who don't know—and I know some here in this chamber do know—my father is an immigrant from Italy who came in 1958, and my mother is an immigrant from Scotland; she came in 1961. To have them here, knowing full well, over the last, again, 40 or so years, of the sacrifices that they undertook to make sure that myself and my siblings, my sister and my two brothers, would have the very best opportunities, to know that they were here that day to share in my success, to share in that very special moment, to watch me be introduced to this chamber, was something that was very special to me. I know it will be awfully hard for me to live up to the standard that they have set, as a parent and as a spouse, but I certainly do endeavour to do that every single day.

And, of course, just to round out the cast, because there were quite a few here—there were over 100 people here that day from my community: my siblings, as I mentioned a second ago; a number of cousins, supporters, people who came out over the course of the by-election campaign. And before that point in time, people who have supported me my entire life were here, individuals like Rocco and Mary Grossi, cousins of mine who have the good fortune of being the ones who actually initially introduced me to the world of politics about 25 years ago, when I was only 14 years of age. To see all of these people here—the Cardiles, to see Frank and Lucy Cardile and others here that day, and to know that with their support and with their ongoing help, I was able to arrive in this place and to represent them, not only as friends but also as constituents, was extremely gratifying for me.

It was also a day for me to get a tiny bit nostalgic, because, of course, there are family members with whom I was extremely close growing up who weren't able to be with me here that day, at least not physically. I speak, of course, of my grandparents, both my maternal and paternal grandparents: my dad's parents, Michelangelo and Alfonso Del Duca—Alfonso actually being my middle name, taken from my paternal grandfather—people who came in the 1950s and 1960s, respectively, from Italy; and in the 1970s, in the case of my maternal grandparents, Henry and Margaret Leonard, from Scotland, people who did their very best to help in every way as I grew up, as I learned from them about the meaning of hard work and the meaning of sacrifice and commitment to one's family, to one's community, to one's country.

It was, as I said a second ago, a bit of a sentimental moment on the 19th of September, a bit of a nostalgic

day, knowing that they weren't here in person, physically, as they have passed on, but knowing that their spirit, I hope, anyway, lives through me in all of the hard work and all of the determination I have to continue to represent the people of Vaughan in the very best possible way.

And friends, friends like the late Tony Gallagher, an individual who I first met back in my very first political experience, the 1988 federal election campaign when, as I mentioned, I was only 14 years of age, going on 15—an individual who was there for me at every turn through many campaigns, through many different years, and someone whom I still miss to this day.

There are a couple of individuals that I do also want to thank. I mentioned a second ago my predecessor, the former member of provincial Parliament from Vaughan, the honourable Greg Sorbara. Greg is someone who is a mentor of mine, someone who is a former employer of mine, a former boss of mine, someone who's a very dear friend. When I look at the community of Vaughan, a city in which I've lived for the last 25 years or so, and I see how much we've grown over the last quarter-century, and I look at how that growth has been shaped so positively, I can see that Greg's fingerprints and Greg's inspiration and energy are all over that in terms of making sure that the right kinds of investments came to our community in Vaughan. To have had the chance to have worked for him directly and to have managed a couple of his campaigns and chaired campaigns, and to have been close and witnessed first-hand that dynamic energy and enthusiasm and that extremely positive, uplifting personality, that spirit that he has, is something that I draw upon on a regular basis. So I want to say here, today, thank you to Greg Sorbara for being such an outstanding MPP and predecessor and friend of mine.

I also want to pay a very quick tribute to my former leader and my former Premier, the Honourable Dalton McGuinty, the member from Ottawa South, an individual whom I've had the chance to know for the last 16 or 17 years, and someone who, I think, when you take into account his entire career, you see an exceptional public servant, someone who understands the importance—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to remind the member. I've given quite a bit of leeway in his maiden speech to deal with his personal situation, but I would like you to at least mention once or twice the budget during your presentation. I'd appreciate that.

I'd also like some quiet from that side. We all show due diligence when someone does their maiden speech, so I don't want to hear any mocking over here.

Continue, please.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I promise that in very, very short order, I'll be addressing the throne speech directly.

Just to finish off very quickly—the member from Ottawa South, someone who has inspired me with his leadership and ability and his dedication to the province of Ontario, and, of course, the former provincial finance

minister, the honourable Dwight Duncan, the member from Windsor-Tecumseh, a gentleman for whom I served as parliamentary assistant for a very brief period of time towards the end of last year and to the beginning of this year.

To address specifically the throne speech itself and to talk about why I'm so happy and so thrilled and proud to stand here in this chamber and be in support of it: When I listened to the throne speech back a number of days ago, I was struck by how it set a very relevant and important and appropriate tone with respect to how the province of Ontario needs to move forward over the next number of years.

The underlying themes of our throne speech were very much in keeping with where this province has been going over the last nine years and needs to continue to go. It's essentially about balance, about fairness, and about being reasonable and responsible.

Over the last nine years, the Ontario Liberal government has spent a great deal of its energy, and its time, investing in both people and physical infrastructure. In fact, when I talk about physical infrastructure and I bring it back to my own community of Vaughan, I think of, again, back on September 19, my very first day in this House. I had a chance—the privilege, actually—to ask our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care my very first question, and it was a question regarding the future Vaughan hospital, a hospital that has been planned and built and will be operated by the folks at Mackenzie Health.

There have been dozens of those kinds of projects built, planned, developed around the province of Ontario over the last decade or so. That's the kind of project that I see as the product of an attitude, of an approach towards governing, that was definitely clear and evident in our throne speech.

I think of the very first chance I had to cast a vote in this chamber as an MPP. It was, I guess, at this point, a number of months ago, regarding the seniors' Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit, something that I know was of great importance to the seniors living in, and the seniors' clubs that are found across, my community of Vaughan.

I think of, again, how important it is to make sure that those individuals who come before us, those individuals who have worked so hard to build our communities, to build our ridings, to build our province and country—to make sure that we don't forget them and we don't forget their sacrifice and their contribution. I know that, with that particular tax credit, we're certainly helping to honour their commitment.

The throne speech not only was founded on those principles that have helped guide this government, this side of the chamber, over the last nine or 10 years, but it certainly had a very aspirational approach or sense to it, a sense of where we want to take the province of Ontario—very hopeful, very optimistic—but making sure that we continue to invest in people, making sure that we continue to invest in infrastructure, making sure that we con-

tinue to invest in research and innovation and in a number of other areas.

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When I take, again, that approach and bring it back to my own community, I think of things like the new subway extension, the Spadina subway extension, that's coming to the community of Vaughan: a significant investment in transit infrastructure that's going to help my community leverage a brand new downtown city core, the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre. I think of the fact that over the last nine years, we invested in building the very first community health centre in Vaughan. That's a community health centre today that serves more than 7,000 clients, people who are learning more and more every day about how to manage chronic illnesses like diabetes, keeping them out of hospitals, keeping them out of emergency rooms.

Those are the kinds of investments that we've delivered over the last nine years. This throne speech and this blueprint will help our government move forward to continue to make those kinds of investments.

I think of the new schools, nearly 100 new schools, built in York region over the course of the last decade, with many dozens built in my own community of Vaughan. Just recently, just a number of weeks ago, I had the privilege of announcing three additional new schools for my riding of Vaughan.

These are the kinds of approaches that this side of the House takes towards governing. These are the kinds of principles that guide the decisions that we make. I know that our throne speech laid out that plan for the next while, to make sure that we keep moving in that same direction.

I think of the investments that we've poured into the Viva Rapid Transit system—tens of millions of dollars for ridings like Vaughan, for ridings like Richmond Hill and others across York region, to make sure that we give our commuters and residents many different options, to make sure that as they want to commute, as they want to get to work, if they want to get home a little bit earlier to spend quality time with their family, they have those options. Again, this is the kind of foundation that we have laid for the people of Ontario over the last decade, and the throne speech is a clear indication that we continue to move in that very direction.

Just the other day, Speaker, I had the chance to stand in this House and ask the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation a question about a project that's extremely important to me and to the people of my community, and that's the extension of Highway 427. I was delighted to hear the minister say to the House that he looks forward to continuing to work with me and to work with the people of my community, to make sure that that's something our government takes a serious look at.

That's important, because in that particular part of my riding, there are close to 1,500 hectares of employment land—it's known as the Vaughan enterprise zone—greenfield, potential employment land that, when fully built out, when fully realized, at its full potential, may

produce between 40,000 and 50,000 jobs for that part of the greater Toronto area. It's extremely important.

I know, again, if you look at our throne speech and you hear the direction that our government plans to continue to move in, those are the kinds of investments that I think—and I hope sincerely—that we can continue to look forward to.

Just the other day, I had the opportunity to go to the official opening of something really spectacular in my community at the Vaughan Mills shopping centre. That was the grand opening of Legoland, and what an exciting day that was. Unfortunately, it took place on a weekday so I wasn't able to bring my daughters with me, because they were at school. But when I told them all about it, they made sure that I would commit to bringing them back as soon as possible.

That's about 34,000 square feet at Vaughan Mills shopping centre, the first Legoland of its kind in Canada that has come to my community because Merlin Entertainments Group and the folks at the Ivanhoé Cambridge shopping centre company understand the importance of continuing to invest in communities like Vaughan, in provinces like Ontario. They recognize that our government is on the right track, and that with their investments and our government's investments in the crucial infrastructure and in people, we'll continue to move our economy forward. They know that we are developing the kind of business climate that's important for them so that they can continue to invest in our province.

There's also an area of the throne speech that I think is extremely important and that I want to address today. That was our consistent commitment to making sure our books are balanced here in the province of Ontario by 2017-18. That's extremely important because, as we all know, as we bring the books back to balance—and it's important to stress bringing them back to balance in a responsible and fair way, making sure that we're not slashing and burning, because we've all seen that kind of stuff before, both here in Ontario and in other jurisdictions—but making sure that we are realistic and knowing that if we bring the budget back to balance, it frees up the opportunity for us to continue to invest in people and infrastructure.

Knowing that we're on track—in fact, perhaps even a little bit ahead of schedule—with respect to our deficit reduction strategy is extremely important. That's very important to the people in my community, who want to make sure we can bring our province's books back to balance, but make sure we can do it in a way that's humane and that's something they can support.

I think, most of all, I would talk a little bit about the fact that we do have additional work to do with respect to job creation. We've certainly had a lot of successes over the last number of years. I mentioned the potential of the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre when Highway 427 is built and its full potential is realized. I talked about Legoland in my community. I talked about the subway. Construction of the subway to Vaughan itself has produced and will produce thousands and thousands of construction jobs, both directly and indirectly.

I mentioned earlier the brand new downtown city core, the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre. We've already seen major corporations express interest in bringing head office jobs to my community; for example, KPMG, a couple hundred new head office jobs that they're going to bring to a new office tower that will be built in the Jane and Highway 7 area of my community of Vaughan. Why did they do that? They did that because they see in our government a partner that's willing to work with them to create that right kind of business environment, that appropriate climate so they can continue to invest both in York region and in the province of Ontario.

Lastly, I would talk a little bit about the fact that leadership is really important. Right now, here in the province of Ontario, we are really blessed, because we have a government that's leading the way. We have a new Premier, in Premier Wynne, and a new cabinet that's leading the way with respect to making sure we don't make the easy decisions; we make the appropriate decisions, the difficult decisions that need to be made in order to make sure our province continues to move forward. When you look at the text of the throne speech itself and you see the behaviour of this government over the last number of weeks, it's very clear to me that this is the kind of leadership that will make sure Ontario and Ontarians continue to come forward economically and socially.

When I think of the first six or so months of my tenure as MPP for Vaughan, having done four town hall meetings—I do them roughly monthly in my community; I just did one before the March break in the lovely town of Kleinburg. About 50 or so people there that night asked me questions. When they hear about our plans for balancing the books fairly, investing in infrastructure, economic development, job creation and continued investments in health care and education, they're happy to know that, here in the province of Ontario, we have a government, a Premier and a cabinet that are extremely focused and hard-working, have the right ideas and are moving our province in the right direction.

Ultimately, that's what it's all about. As I said at the very beginning of my remarks today, I'm extremely proud to be the MPP for Vaughan. It's a great community to represent. I look forward to working as hard as I possibly can over the next number of weeks, months and, hopefully, years to continue to represent the wonderful people of my community to the best of my abilities, so that we can move our own community and our entire province forward together.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's a pleasure to speak to the throne speech. What I'd like to speak to is not so much what's in it but what is not in it. What I often don't hear in this chamber at all—or often enough, for sure—is the subject of property rights. I'm going to take a moment to talk about that, because I think it's fundamentally important to our Western liberal democracy. Property rights are the foundation of any Western democracy, and we just

didn't hear about it in this throne speech. I want to give you a couple of examples of infringements on property rights that demonstrate the importance of it and the immense impact that this House and the legislation we produce can have on people's private property rights.

A man named Bobby Radcliffe lives in Milton; he has a 10-acre property in Milton. He called me a number of years ago in my previous job as president of the Ontario Landowners Association. His problem was that he inherited this property from his parents that he wanted to sell to do a settlement of his parents' estate and share it with his brother. They had the right to build a house on this property, so he said to a real estate agent, "Would you please sell this for me?" The real estate agent called him back shortly and said, "Well, Mr. Radcliffe, I can't sell it. Your property has zero market value because it is designated as a provincially significant wetland, which negates the market value of the property." Yet Mr. Radcliffe gets an assessment from the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. of \$385,000. So he has to pay property taxes on a property that has zero market value because the government placed a land use designation on his private property.

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That is something that's very, very wrong, and it should be addressed in throne speeches and by this House at all times. Property rights are removed from Bobby Radcliffe and people all over Ontario by actions we take in this House. We speak of it precious little, and certainly it's not in the throne speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: First, just an opportunity to respond to my colleague from Vaughan—a good maiden speech. I share the enthusiasm you had for that day. It was very special to have family and friends here. It was really interesting because my daughter who was sitting here that morning asked, "Are you all actors?"

I think that's part of the problem that we all have, actually, is that people think we're just acting here when, really, we should be working together. We should be focused on the priorities and the strategies. Within the context of the throne speech that was delivered earlier this month, there was really a lack of substance, quite honestly.

One of the strongest emotions that I've felt since I've been here is how differently we see the world from that side of the House to this side of the House—even from this side of the House to this corner over here. When you talk to Ontarians, they're quite concerned. The reality that they face outside of this world, which is Queen's Park, is quite different from what you hear sometimes in this House.

Actually, we just met with the students from the Canadian Federation of Students. They shared some real concerns about rising tuition rates and the debt load that they're graduating with, which is why our party has decided to focus, as one of our five priorities, which are very public, on jobs for youth, because people are going

to school, they're graduating with debt loads and the jobs just aren't there. In fact, the doors are closed. So our First Start jobs strategy has a very focused, strategic approach to opening doors to jobs and connecting to education. That's where our priorities should be.

I'd like to commend the member for his maiden speech and to say that this is where the work should happen. That throne speech needs some work. That's all I have to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm thrilled to be given an opportunity to speak in rebuttal of my colleague and seatmate, the member from Vaughan. I was really pleased to hear his history and his road to Queen's Park. It's wonderful to hear about the supporters who came to his inauguration here at Queen's Park but, more importantly, the history he had before he came to Queen's Park and the fact that he's so passionate and caring—the true vision we have as a party but, more importantly, that here we have a member who shares with each one of us this afternoon about his contribution, his predecessor. He acknowledged those who came before him. More importantly, he also talked about the whole issue of our throne speech. The Premier and the Lieutenant Governor spoke about the economy, transportation, the infrastructure and, more importantly, about the balanced budget that we are going to bring forward because, at the end of the day, this province can only thrive and continue to prosper if we work together. The focus on the throne speech is on a balanced economy, a strong economy and making sure the infrastructure is there to support all of us.

The other piece that my colleague from Vaughan spoke about is the fact that he shared with each one of us the development, the expansion of the city of Vaughan. As somebody who worked up there for a number of years, I can tell you that this government has transformed, has improved and, most importantly, the legacy. He spoke about transportation. He talked about the hospital, the building of three new schools. That speaks volumes—the contribution of this government but, more importantly, continuing to build the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd also like to comment on the maiden speech of the member for Vaughan. Welcome to this Legislature. I guess, first time around on your maiden speech, we don't beat each other up. We give you a good pass and a pat on the back.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Next time.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Next time; definitely. I know you would have given a speech earlier if we didn't prorogue for four months. But congratulations. I appreciate listening to the maiden speeches and hearing about where people have come from and their family and why they're here. I totally agree with you, with the fact that we're all here for the future of this province. Either with our kids or grandkids or parents or what have you, we're looking to make Ontario stronger.

Then we're on a different path when we revert to this throne speech that you mention in your speech, and that you're on a plan moving forward. Well, the Liberal government's plan for Ontario does not work for Elgin–Middlesex–London, and I'll just touch upon—you may have Legoland in your riding, but over the past 10 years, my riding has lost jobs—factories—at Ford, Sterling, Lear, Therm-O-Disc—that's just off the top of my head—and, to top it off, in two months' time, Timken, which has been part of our community for over 60 years. It contributed a lot; we have a hockey arena named after Timken, because they gave so much money—another loss to our community.

So the current plan the Wynne government is on—the McGuinty-Wynne government, I guess, since it's going in the same direction—isn't working in Ontario. It's not working for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

I just want to make sure that's on the record here, that we need a change of direction in this province. Tim Hudak has given great plans and ideas to take us in that direction, and—

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's the McGuinty-Wynne coalition.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: And the coalition—I will touch on it really quickly, I've got 10 seconds; thanks for making that—horse racing would still be around today in strength if the NDP had actually voted down the budget last year instead of sitting on their hands.

Thanks very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Vaughan has two minutes.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin my two minutes by thanking the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo; of course, my outstanding seatmate, the member from Scarborough–Agincourt; and the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for their comments.

I listened very carefully to all that was said. One of the things that I didn't mention in my opening 20 minutes that I do want to talk about a little bit now, briefly, is, in listening carefully to the comments made today, but also in listening to the questions and the debate that take place here regularly, I think I want to stress—I know, in fact, Speaker, I want to stress—that a great deal of progress has been made in the province of Ontario, in York region, in my community of Vaughan, and in so many other communities over the last nine or 10 years.

But just because exceptional progress has been made—and it certainly has, in health care, in education, in social infrastructure, in physical infrastructure, in the environment, across a whole wide array of topics—does not mean that our work is done. It certainly isn't done.

Nothing of what I said in my opening 20 minutes was meant to suggest that our work is done. It's why we're here, it's why we're here doing the people's business, and it's why it is so important to go back, for the members opposite and others, to carefully review the throne speech, to see exactly how much opportunity and

promise there is in the throne speech for us moving this province forward.

Again, whether it's in areas like research and innovation, whether it's in areas like dealing with our seniors, whether it's in areas dealing with health care, education, infrastructure and transportation, a number of important challenges are facing the people of Ontario. But with a government in charge that understands the importance of being balanced and being fair and being responsible and avoiding the temptation to be too extreme, either to the right or to the left—because Ontarians are not extreme people. They want careful, moderate, responsible, balanced leadership. That's the kind of leadership they have, because of Premier Wynne and our government, and that's definitely the kind of leadership that's exemplified by the throne speech.

Once again, that's why I was so proud, and am proud, to support our throne speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member from Leeds–Grenville.

It's great to speak about this throne speech. After reading the throne speech and listening to the debate, I think we can sum up the Liberal Party with a syllogism that goes something like this: The more one works, the richer he is. The more difficulties and obstacles one overcomes, the more one works. Therefore, the more obstacles he overcomes, the richer he must be. That's what this government is all about: obstacles and obstructions and an interventionist government.

Speaker, this government wanted everyone to acknowledge a few things when they gave this speech from the throne, but there's one thing that they didn't acknowledge: their nine years of dismal, complete and unmitigated economic failure.

Let me give this House a number: 1.84%. That's how much the economy grew, per person, after adjusting for inflation. That's not 1.84% per year; that's over the Liberal nine-year regime: 1.84% under the McGuinty-Wynne government. That's the Dalton legacy that our supposedly-new Premier wants to build on.

1650

Here's another number: \$258 billion. That's how much debt Ontario has this budget year. That's over \$20,000 for every man, woman and child in Ontario. The moment a child is born in a hospital in Smiths Falls, in Windsor, in Kenora or in Toronto, that child is already in debt \$20,000.

Here's another number: 6.1%. That's the annual rate of spending growth under the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government. That's twice the rate of population growth and inflation combined.

The year 2009: That's the first year Ontario ever received equalization payments. That's the first time in the history of Confederation that the bedrock of Confederation, Ontario, became the laggard of Confederation.

Six years: That's how long Ontario's unemployment rate has been above the national average. Today, over

600,000 people awoke in Ontario without a job. That's equivalent to half the entire population of Ottawa. In January, Ontario only added to this disappointing record, losing another 48,000 private-sector jobs.

Here's another number: 5,591. That's how many people left Ontario for other provinces. In fact, all of my three sons have gone to western Canada to seek better economic opportunities than they could find in either urban or rural Ontario. Simply put, Ontario is no longer the economic engine of Confederation. This is the legacy of Dalton. It is the legacy that Premier Wynne wants to build on. It's a legacy of economic failure, debt, deficit, equalization payments, unemployment and emigration.

It shouldn't be too hard to build on this legacy. There's a simple way: Repudiate it. That's how you build on that legacy: Simply repudiate it. That's my recommendation to the Premier: If you want to build on this legacy, repudiate it. That's why the Ontario PC Party has put forward proposals to do just that.

The Premier says that she wants to put unemployed people back to work. We here in the PC Party have put those ideas forward to get Ontario back on track, to become a job creator in Canada once again.

The Liberal government seems intent on ruining good-paying jobs in the construction industry. That's why they introduced Bill 119, which forces independent contractors and operators—who are unlikely to ever file a WSIB claim, and who already have around-the-clock insurance—to pony up to WSIB. The other day, there was a contractor here in the Legislature—a young contractor who had his first child. He pays under \$50 a month for private insurance that's better coverage than the WSIB, but now he's forced to pay \$5,000 a year in addition for inferior WSIB insurance. Instead of paying that \$5,000 to WSIB, he could be putting it into a savings account for his daughter and for his family. By the time she needs to go to university, that would be near \$150,000. But he won't have that; WSIB will have it.

Others have told me that they are already feeling the heat from the underground competition—that they're being forced to compete with illegal competitors. Bill 119 and mandatory WSIB insurance for them will only drive more underground or out of business. It's hard to see how this policy of the Liberal government is designed to put people back to work.

We can look at the Liberal labour policies. What place would you hope Ontario's labour legislation would have more in common with: any one of 47 European democracies or the sole and last remaining European dictatorship? Regrettably, Ontario wouldn't be on the side of every European democracy but on the side of Belarus. Instead of taking the side of the fundamental human right of freedom of association and letting people bargain with their employers independently, which has proven throughout the developed world to create jobs and economic growth, the Liberals are taking the side of the public sector union bosses to whom they are practically married. Why put people back to work when there are union bosses they can woo?

Or we can go through their absolutely absurd apprenticeship ratios. Pretty much every province in Canada and every American state uses a ratio of 1:1 for journeymen. Ontario uses 3:1. Instead of taking our proposals, ceasing to be the odd man out and creating thousands of high-paying jobs, the Liberals would rather keep a 3:1 ratio. We would rather put Ontario back to work. As the Liberals do, they would rather please their union supporters. This government has a different answer for the 600,000 people out of work than those people would hope for.

But that's what we've grown to expect from the Liberal government: no respect at all, a lot of talk, very little or no substance. We know we can do better. We know that Ontario can do better. We also know that this government can do better. But to do better they have to start on the right track, and that is to repudiate Dalton's legacy and adopt policies that work.

That's what I got out of this throne speech. Unlike the NDP, who talk about how negative the throne speech is, we walk the talk here. We will not be supporting this throne speech. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to join in this debate, and I'm pleased to be sharing with my neighbour, the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I think this gives us a good opportunity to put our comments on the record, and I appreciate a number of points he has made.

I took last week's constituency week—it was a busy schedule, and I had a number of constituency meetings. I talked to a lot of folks, including going to our agricultural community. I had a nice event with the Grenville OFA in Roebuck, I toured a retirement home in Merrickville, I had an exceptional breakfast with local mayors in Maynard to discuss economic development issues, and I also had a chance in Brockville one evening to meet with the board of Children's Mental Health of Leeds and Grenville. So I take some of those comments that folks gave me at those meetings and some of the constituency meetings in forwarding my remarks today.

I have to tell you that I took the opportunity to reread the speech from the throne. It should be no surprise that I am no more impressed than I was the day I sat here in the Legislature. I'm very disappointed. In fact, I was critical in my local daily newspaper, the Brockville Recorder and Times, when I was asked about how I felt the McGuinty-Wynne government did with the speech from the throne. My quote at the time was, "We really needed to hear that bold action, that new direction and we didn't hear it."

I was expecting, when you have a new Premier, the opportunity to make a clean break from her predecessor under the circumstances of the fact that Dalton McGuinty resigned in this growing gas plant scandal. Even today the minister stands and corrects his record to tell further information that the government has withheld from the people of Ontario. After four months of having this place shuttered, four months that this government prorogued,

you would think that in a speech from the throne you would get some humility and perhaps even an apology from a government for taking us away from this place and taking away the right of the opposition to hold the government to account on the issue of the gas plant scandal.

1700

There was certainly no apology from this government on February 19 for the throne speech. There was no acknowledgement that their politically motivated decision to shutter this House and rightfully anger the people of Ontario even happened. You wouldn't even know it from any of the words in this throne speech. It's extremely ironic, however, Speaker, that the Premier chose to include this line. I'm going to quote this line from the throne speech: "Members of provincial Parliament must be conduits for their constituents, so that this Legislature can hear all the voices of this province and represent all of its diverse needs." Well, Premier, it's pretty hard to do that, isn't it, when the door of this place has been locked for four months.

I have to tell you that our caucus, the Ontario PC caucus, was expecting to hear some very solid words in the throne speech, not the empty rhetoric that we sat here and listened to that day. I think that we wanted to see some bold actions, and I'm going to get to that later on in my address.

I want to give you another quote that the Premier included in the throne speech, that "your new government believes that complex times require thoughtful, collaborative solutions.

"And that we can only surmount each obstacle by acknowledging that they are all connected.

"And that we are all connected."

I know that they've issued some style tips. They've got some guidelines where they want all of their cabinet members and all their caucus—but after I read that quote I'd love one of you, just one of you, to try to explain what the heck that means. It didn't make any sense. I'm certainly not going to use any of those style tips when I meet my local federation of agriculture in Leeds county on Friday night, because I'll tell you, if I used that type of bafflegab, they'd be showing me the door pretty quick on Friday.

But I'm going to help you out, though. I've rewritten the line. Here's how I would have written that line in the throne speech. I would have said, "Your government understands that Ontario faces a tremendous fiscal and economic crisis. That's why our first priority is to balance the books with a series of bold and decisive actions that will once again make Ontario a place for the private sector to invest and create jobs." That's what people in my riding of Leeds–Grenville who have lost their jobs under the McGuinty-Wynne watch want to hear. That's what they wanted to hear in the throne speech—no empty words, no soothing words, no soothing tone. They want bold, decisive action on the problems that are facing Ontario.

Last week, in the break week, I heard from lots of constituents, and in fact I promised some of them that I

would bring their comments to the floor today. I want to quote one email from Margo Phillips of Brockville. It reads:

"Steve:

"Your office, that is, Pauline, has been very helpful with this issue.

"Which has boiled down to this: The chip in my meter"—she's talking about her hydro meter—"was messed up, giving them the wrong readings. Of course, this has apparently meant that I have been underpaying all season, resulting in a March bill of \$150. This is just not in my budget.

"And I paid my bill in good faith, knowing that I might have a round-up bill to pay at season's end, hopefully a reasonable amount. Instead I get told that I'm behind and I must pay in full, now.

"I tried to ask if I could pay a little more each month to cover it, but I was told that I needed to put up my equal billing amount for the rest of the season, and that I would have to pay the full amount of the March bill right away, no installments."

This is the type of email and this is the type of constituent that I've been getting, not just during constituent week—this week, the week before, all winter long. These are the type of words—if you want words that should be in the throne speech, there should have been some words that I could have given this constituent and the other constituents when they've come and faced that same heavy-handed tactic.

Another email is from Heidi Bernicky, whose daughter, Rebecca, has just been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. If that diagnosis wasn't enough for a worried mom to cope with, Heidi contacted my constituency office in despair after learning her daughter would wait over a year for a neurological specialist. Her email really captured her frustration, as she felt that the health care system puts dollars into building these LHIN bureaucracies ahead of the front-line care that she and so many constituents want. Her email:

"This is not acceptable. A year to watch her change before my eyes—the continued weight loss, muscle loss, weakness and so on. To sit on the back burner and wait....

"If Rebecca is not seen for a year, her disease will get more of a chance to get hold of her. The waiting and the worry is very stressful."

For those people who are on a waiting list, whether it be for health care or home care or affordable housing, this throne speech offered them nothing. The only thing in the speech that gave anybody a glimmer of hope was this quote, and frankly I don't know how it survived the final edit. Here is a quote from the throne speech: "The central objectives of your new government will be fiscal responsibility, economic growth and increased employment—the bedrocks on which it will build."

So you know what? We're back, about a month, right? Here are the bills that the government has tabled to reach out to their bedrock of fiscal responsibility, economic growth and increased employment: Bill 6, the Great Lakes Protection Act; Bill 11, the Ambulance Amend-

ment Act; Bill 14, the Non-profit Housing Co-operatives Statute Law Amendment Act; Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act; Bill 30, the Skin Cancer Prevention Act—not one bill that deals with any of the supposed bedrocks of this government, nothing.

On the other hand, our party, the official opposition, the Ontario PC Party, as my friend from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has said, we talk the talk and walk the walk. Here are some of our bills that we've put forward that deal with cutting red tape, reducing government spending, and yes—wait for it—creating jobs: Bill 17, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act; Bill 19, the Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act; Bill 22, the Helping Ontarians Enter the Skilled Trades Act; Bill 25—wait for it—the Sick Days are for Sick People Act; and of course I can't forget the member for Thornhill's bill, Bill 5, the Comprehensive Public Sector Compensation Freeze Act, that was introduced and passed second reading, which I think, again, the government needs to get moving on. It's something that was the will of this House, that was voted on as a private member's bill.

And that's not all, because we've made sure, from an official opposition perspective, that we've put some bold ideas on the table. We have added 12 white papers that we've tabled to get our economy moving again on a variety of topics. We've committed to bring more legislation forward to deal with the bedrocks of what should be happening in this province. One of them is on arbitration, something municipalities in this province have asked for, for years and years.

Rather than flowery language, we've put some legislation forward, we've tabled some white papers, engaged Ontarians in a bold discussion on getting our fiscal house in order. We haven't given the flowery words. We haven't tabled fluff pieces of legislation. And you know what? If you look at this document, *The Way Forward*, let's face it, Minister, this is the way backward. This is not what Ontarians expected. This is certainly not what Ontarians expected after your government shuttered democracy for four months. You ran and hid, and people aren't going to stand for it.

We're tabling this. We're not going to support this throne speech. I'm proud to vote against it. This is not the way forward in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and the member from Leeds-Grenville for their comments.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order. The member from Thornhill.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You're welcome.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm going to spend my two minutes just speaking about the health care piece that my colleague from Leeds-Grenville talked about.

You know, people elected a minority this last election for a reason. It's because they want to get results, and I can tell you that these health care cuts are negatively impacting thousands and thousands of Ontarians. At the same time that this government continues to cut beds across the province, they have not made an equal investment in home care in this province.

I have emails every day. I have friends and colleagues who have been pushed out of the hospital before they were ready, leading to many readmissions and thousands of dollars of additional cost, because there aren't enough beds in the system while there isn't enough care in people's homes.

1710

The issue of mental health services across this province: There was a select committee in the last government—I don't know whether our members sat on that committee—and they made many recommendations. Twenty-three recommendations were made in that select committee, and only three have been acted on. The other—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. The member from Welland. Stop the clock, please.

Two members here are yelling across the floor to their members here, when they could walk over or walk outside and talk to them. I can't hear the member from Welland. Last warning.

Continue.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker.

I did a survey back in May in my own riding, and I had 1,400 people respond to that survey. Seventy-five per cent of parents that responded to that survey reported that their child never received any mental health services in my community, and 50% of adults reported that they had received no mental health services.

We have a crisis in mental health, we have a crisis in home care, and we need to get some action on these health care files to ensure that the people of Ontario are not falling through the cracks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a pleasure for me to be back up so soon after my maiden speech. I listened very closely as the members opposite—

Interjection.

Mr. Steven Del Duca:—indeed—spoke just a couple of minutes ago about the throne speech. I listened to the member from Leeds–Grenville; I certainly listened to the member from Welland. I was particularly struck by the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and his comments. A couple of things struck me about his comments. He went on at length—in a bit of a confusing, rambling way—regarding how our government's policies have cost jobs or have hurt the construction sector with respect to job creation.

In my experience in the riding of Vaughan—not just in Vaughan, but across Ontario over the last 10 years, I have seen nothing but exceptional support for the

construction industry here in Ontario, because of the billions and billions of dollars that our government has invested in crucial public infrastructure. I mentioned in my maiden speech a short while ago the Vaughan hospital that's going to be getting built soon, but beyond the Vaughan hospital—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Soon? How soon?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's 2014-15 for tendering. But beyond that, I look at hospitals in North York like the new Humber hospital, and stuff that we've seen all across the province of Ontario: thousands and thousands of women and men working in the skilled trades, in construction, who have benefited directly because of the decisions made by our government, as I said, in investing in crucial public infrastructure. So I'm not quite sure that I understand exactly where that member was drawing on for those experiences where our government's policies have hurt individuals working in the construction industry specifically.

But probably even more troubling for me than the construction industry comment, I thought I heard that member talk about how people should repudiate—that side wants to repudiate the Ontario Liberal government's approach to a number of policy areas, including immigration. I'm not quite sure what that meant, Speaker, but I will say, as I mentioned in my maiden remarks, as the son of immigrants—one immigrant from Italy, one from Scotland—I find it extremely troubling that the member opposite would take this opportunity today, instead of speaking about the throne speech, to talk in such a narrow way with respect to the policy that has helped build this province and build this country. I found that extremely troubling and hope that at some point that member will get a chance to clarify his remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just wanted to join in the conversation and just add that a couple of the remarks that I've heard from my colleagues across the way, particularly from the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington—you know, I understand the frustration. I feel, also with the member from Leeds–Grenville, the frustration that you must have heard from your constituents back home in regard to the prorogation, a lot of the negative feedback that you've received from your constituents—just the fact that the government is going on as if it never took place, the actual accountability that is not happening, and a lot of the window dressing that we see with some of the bills and the legislation being proposed by this government.

It's a lot of the same old same old. A lot of it is feel-good bills; it gives you that fuzzy-wuzzy feeling that you have in your stomach and apparently everything—it looks good on paper, it gets those headlines. Maybe this is where the focus of this government is. I hear some of the legislation that you have brought forward. We also have brought some very good ideas, but we've done it in a different way. We want to be engaged. We are sent here by our constituents in order to do a job, and for us to take

ourselves out of the conversation really is not serving our constituents back home. So we're going to look at this throne speech in a different way and try to get results: trying to get results for youth and creating jobs for them where they need it, when they're coming out of schools; trying to work towards a five-day home care guarantee for constituents back home; getting insurance rates cut by 15% for people as well is something that we need to look forward to; and changing the rules for individuals who are on ODSP and OW so that they can keep more of their dollars when they have an opportunity to work.

So I look forward to engaging all of the House so that we can have these discussions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Well, second chance for the member from Renfrew.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much. A second chance—the story of my life, Speaker.

Look, we're always interested in, of course, all of the speeches, but I was particularly taken by the speech from my colleague from the great riding of Leeds–Grenville. What I really was taken by was the contrast that he drew between the words of the Liberal government, that the bedrock on which they were going to build would be fiscal responsibility, economic growth and increased employment, and how little they have done in that regard since that throne speech.

On the other hand, you've got the Progressive Conservative Party here in opposition, which has introduced a number of bills that are designed to deal exactly with those issues. Not only that, we released a number of white papers for discussion across the province of Ontario to get some valuable feedback from the people as to what we can do to turn this Liberal mess around once there is an election and, good Lord willing, we're elected as the government, because it cannot go on the way it is going.

That's what I took from it the most, that you have a throne speech—the first throne speech for a new Premier. They mentioned the words “new government,” I believe, 16 times in that throne speech.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, that's their big, new style, new government, but it's the same old same old. Nothing has really changed. The McGuinity-Wynne government is what it is. There's nothing new there for the people.

We've been here now since the 19th of February, and those are the kinds of bills that are coming forward, bills that really don't change in any dramatic way the direction that Ontario is going. We're on a downward spiral, thanks to Dalton McGuinty and his cronies over there, now being led by Kathleen Wynne, and they've done nothing in this length of time to actually try to stop that downward spiral.

It's time to take some action. Stop with the conversations; stop with the words. Let's get on with the job of making Ontario better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Leeds–Grenville has two minutes.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Speaker. On behalf of myself and the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, I would like to thank the member for Welland, the member for Vaughan, the member for Algoma–Manitowlin and certainly the very eloquent member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I want to make one comment because my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington talked about his three sons leaving the province. I also have two boys, two young men, who left this province to work in Fort McMurray. I had my son tell me on the weekend that he's seriously considering a job opportunity in another province as well.

Again, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington talked about the legacy of Dalton McGuinty and the fact that Kathleen Wynne indicated that she wanted to build upon that legacy. Well, I agree with my colleague that I shared my time with: It's a legacy of failure. I truly believe that this is not, as this document says, the way forward; it is the way backward.

There is, honestly, one party in this Legislative Assembly that has put some clear policies on the table, that is willing to make those tough decisions, whether it be through private members' business or other policy statements. We have to create jobs. We have to balance our books. We have to get our economy back on track.

We're not going to do it by the flowery language of the government opposite. We're not going to do it by sitting on our hands on a budget or supporting a government on a throne speech. We need to make those tough decisions. We need to have the convictions to implement those policies so we can get our economy back on track.

That's the commitment that I make to the people of Leeds–Grenville.

1720

I'm pleased to join my colleagues to vote against this throne speech.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me this chance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's truly an honour for me to once again speak on behalf of the good people of Timiskaming–Cochrane, who chose to send me here to represent them.

I would like to start my comments on the throne speech by answering a few questions that people asked me about the throne speech.

I had a few questions about yesterday's vote. I'd like to start with that.

The throne speech—I think a lot of people don't understand what it is. It's the government's mission statement. Let's call it their mission statement. “Here are the things that we want to accomplish in the next—”

Ms. Cindy Forster: Their vision.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, their vision.

When I said that, they said, “Well, yes, but didn't they just have that a little while ago?” Yes, they did, but they decided to close the place down, so they had to have an-

other one. Basically—and we’ve heard it lots of times—it’s the new government. In political speak, they’re trying to change the channel. They’re trying to push the pause button. That’s what this throne speech was about.

It was my second while I’ve been here, but I’ve watched a few of them on TV, and you see that it’s a very important day. They line up the chairs, and all kinds of people come to watch the throne speech.

My mom was here. She happened to be here. She was in the members’ gallery. She got a bit lost, and the Speaker had to take her back to my office, but she was here.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, and you took her home. And the Speaker got the same speech that Uncle Ernie and you got.

Anyway, all the people come because they’re looking for some kind of a direction from the government. They’re looking for a direction. I think with this throne speech everybody got a word or two, and that’s part of the problem. Everybody got a word or two, but there really wasn’t a direction. It was a feel-good document, even though we are in very tough times right now. It was “The new government is going to do this”—I’m going to go through it in a few minutes, what the new government is going to do. That’s what it was. It was a feel-good document.

Everyone was here hoping they’d get their word. Yes, northern Ontario got a couple of words. Rural Ontario got a couple of words. I believe agriculture was mentioned once. I think everybody got their words, but no one really got a direction.

So, “Okay, what we should do is vote the government down on their mission statement.” I don’t think that we were sent here to do that. The government has to come up with more than a mission statement. They have to come up with more than words, and where the more-than-words come in is in the budget. That’s where the government has to put the rubber to the road.

I got a few calls last night about, “Well, wasn’t what you voted on yesterday the budget?” No, it wasn’t the budget. It was a bill so that the bills could get paid so there wouldn’t be chaos the next day.

I didn’t get sent here to vote against bills if that’s going to cause chaos. We were sent here to run this Parliament and, on the opposition side, to both critique the government and propose better ideas and eventually take them out. That’s what we were sent here to do. We weren’t sent here to create chaos. If we had voted against that bill, people wouldn’t have gotten their pensions or ODSP. That would have created chaos. That wasn’t a budget. That was an interim supply motion. Trying to make it sound like you had to vote against that if you—I think that was being disingenuous. It was being disingenuous.

For the people who ask me that question at home, there will come a time, when the budget comes down, when that vote will make a difference, and that vote is where you judge the government. But you don’t judge

the government—you watch—on an interim supply motion. Usually, that’s even a voice vote. Basically, making that a recorded vote and saying, “Oh, yeah, we’re the ones standing up for the people,” is being disingenuous to the people who put you there.

I’d like to go through a couple of things on the throne speech and a couple of issues where I would like to expand on the words a little bit, what we were hoping to see in the throne speech. I’m hoping to see something like this in the budget. I have a northern Ontario slant; I’m a proud northerner. Lots of times, you hear of problems in the north. I just heard a member of the opposition say, “You know what? My kids had to go to Fort McMurray.” My kids—I’m fortunate—work in the province, but it’s tough. Lots of those kids could come north. We have jobs. In the north, lots of places—there’s money coming out of the north into the rest of the province. We have jobs. Mining is coming back, and mining is coming back not because of policies of the Liberal government. Mining has come back because of the price of minerals. Forestry is coming back. It went through a horrible time. It’s coming back despite some of the things the government did. It’s coming back because the lumber market is coming back. There are jobs in northern Ontario. But because of our unique geographical circumstances, there are problems in northern Ontario, as well.

Interjection: There’s jobs in Windsor, too.

Mr. John Vanthof: I agree.

But where I was particularly concerned in the throne speech—there was something about how they were going to look at transportation in northern Ontario. Well, firstly, we don’t need a throne speech; we need roads that are safe. Highway 11 is closed on a weekly basis, the Trans-Canada Highway.

When I ran five years ago, I believed in the northern growth plan. The northern growth plan was something for 25 years. I was president of the federation of agriculture then. I dutifully went to all the consultation sessions. Usually, it’s a three-year election cycle, but this was a plan for 25 years, folks. We got the plan. There were actually a few lines in there about how people were concerned about the thickness of ice roads 25 years from now. Well, we’re worried about the ice on the highway last week. Those are little things but they’re—especially since this government took it upon themselves to take away our passenger rail service. It was a year ago—in three days it will be a year—that they decided to divest the ONTC. But they haven’t, to their—how do I put this?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Discredit.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no. Actually, they have bungled this so badly that they have a second chance. They have a second chance because they haven’t divested the ONTC. So maybe the new government wants to hit the pause button and say, “You know what? We want to look at this again.” They talk about strategies. To me—I’ve run a business my whole life—you talk about the strategy while you still have the infrastructure in place. If the infrastructure absolutely doesn’t fit in the strategy, okay, but you don’t dump the infra-

structure and then talk about strategy; that just doesn't work.

Interjection: Who would run a business like that?

Mr. John Vanthof: No, I wouldn't run mine like that.

There was another line about how you don't want people to fall through the cracks. That one struck me too. Why that one really struck me is because since I've been here we've had the Ornge—people call it a fiasco, but we have heard a lot of times about whistle-blowers, how whistle-blowers should be protected. Trevor Kidd was in the members' gallery here, and he was one of the first people who blew the whistle on Ornge—lost his job for it. He was applauded here—a great guy. I have this in my riding right now. Whistle-blowers are being sued.

Interjection: Nine.

Mr. John Vanthof: Nine whistle-blowers are being sued by the hospital board, which is being funded by the LHIN controlled by the Ministry of Health. And in the throne speech we've got, "Boy, we're worried about people falling through the cracks." You know? But let's—

Interjection.

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Mr. John Vanthof: No, I've got no problem; if someone wants to sue somebody personally, I've got no problem. But when somebody is using my taxpayers' money to intimidate people, I've got a big problem with that—a big, big, big problem with that.

Ms. Cindy Forster: And it should be covered under the Public Hospitals Act anyway.

Mr. John Vanthof: Somebody should step in.

The one thing that constantly comes up about northern Ontario: Almost every document, big document, has got Ring of Fire on it, that mythical Ring of Fire, named after a Johnny Cash song, by the way. And the Ring of Fire is—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: It is named after a Johnny Cash song and it's got big potential for not just northern Ontario but for Ontario, yet we don't seem to be realizing its potential. We still haven't really had a clear answer on whether we're going to process this stuff here or process it in China. We don't have a clear answer on an intention of bringing the ONTC into it again. Whether we're going to go there with rail or whether we're going to go there with road: That's something we should discuss before we decide to dump the railway.

Another issue that, again, is not specifically in the throne speech but it's an issue that has to be addressed for single-industry towns, for casino towns: MPAC. It doesn't sound like—and some of us, you know, you can appeal your tax assessment on your house, if you feel the assessment is too high. You know the deadline for that is coming up—it's coming up quick. If you feel that's the case, you should do it. But we've got cases in single-industry towns where these appeals, when it comes to big companies—forestry companies, casinos—where these assessments and the reassessment basically could bankrupt the town. Those are things that have to be addressed,

and they won't be addressed by causing chaos by voting against interim supply motions. So let's be clear what we are talking about here.

Like I said previously, where the rubber is going to meet the road is going to be the budget. That is where decisions will have to be made. So no, we didn't vote against the interim supply motion because that doesn't make sense. On this side over here, we don't vote against everything just because we like voting no. You know? Here we don't. Here we look to see if what the people are proposing makes sense, and that's what we base our votes on.

In this case, in the budget we propose five things that are achievable, that would make a difference in people's lives, would make a difference in this province and would show us that the government is really serious about getting back on the right track. Because up until now, they're saying all the right things. Lots of conversation, lots of dialogue, and they're saying all the right things but we haven't seen the proof yet.

So right now, I think we're still with this side. They're saying all the right things. I'll agree with my folks on the right. They're trying to say everything to everybody, but they haven't proven anything yet. They have a chance. When the budget comes out, they have a chance. If the new Premier really wants to run a new government, she's going to have to do a few things differently.

One thing she's going to have to do—we all know she's going to have to balance the books. She didn't—the member on the other side said that they were already balancing the books. That's not true. Sorry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timiskaming—Cochrane will talk through the Chair and not have a dialogue with other members. Thank you.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you for rerouting my attention, Speaker. I appreciate that.

Interjection: You were having so much fun.

Mr. John Vanthof: I was.

The new government is going to have to demonstrate that it can balance the books. Doing that, it's going to have to have realistic—not expectations, but it's going to have to come out with realistic figures and not with cheap shots like, "We're going to save \$247 million by cancelling the ONTC." That didn't happen. That \$247 million wasn't saved. They haven't realized anything from selling the ONTC. They're going to have to come up with real figures. That's really important. They're going to have to come up with real figures.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Why is it? Does no one want to buy it?

Mr. John Vanthof: That's part of the problem.

One of the biggest issues in my riding and I think in a lot of our ridings, and in northern Ontario it's maybe more acute, is home care. What we propose, the five-day home care guarantee, would make a big difference, a huge difference in people's lives, people who don't really watch us or don't really pretend to understand how government works or really care. But they're people for

whom that home care guarantee would make a big change in their lives.

One other thing we should do, or they should do: They should change the employment, the earnings rules for OW and ODSP. Sometimes, Speaker, actually people say, "Those people, they don't like to work." That's not true. But the way the rules are now, they are basically forced either into the underground economy or forced not to work. I meet lots of people in unfortunate circumstances in my office, Speaker. If those rules were changed, we could give them a step up, a big step up.

One thing we're going to have to do, or they're going to have to do, is they're going to have to close some corporate tax loopholes. You know what? I ran a business my whole life. Nobody likes paying tax, but everyone should pay their fair share. It's not rocket science. There are corporate tax loopholes here. The argument always is that if we close them or if we make people pay their fair share of tax, then jobs will leave. I don't know if they can leave at any faster pace than they have been, but I don't believe that; we don't believe that. If people pay their fair share of tax, and if they get a fair share of services from that tax, like our health care system—you know, our health care system saves companies a lot of money, and I don't think they have a problem paying for that.

Another thing that's a big issue in our area is the First Job program. I heard a comment that for the First Job program, you need an economy for that. Where I come from, we have an economy. One of our biggest problems is when you go for your first job and you need your first job. When I employed people, I wanted experience, because you have a better chance of making a profit when you have someone with experience. We believe that the government would invest in the economy by helping people get their first job, and they would be better providers in the future for the economy.

Last, Speaker, but certainly not least, as we were looking at ways to make the province run better, make the economy run better, and looking at ways to save the government money, it came to our attention—and it has come to our attention for a while—that we have made big changes, the government has made big changes, in the auto insurance industry over the last few years, but that hasn't really filtered down to the people who actually pay the rates. We made a strong suggestion that the government should make some changes that actually make a difference to people's rates.

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Those are achievable issues and those are issues that we're willing to support, but without them, we're not willing to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane for his remarks. I thought it was a really good speech. There were a couple of points in there that I really liked.

I liked the part where he was scolding the Conservatives about their position on the interim supply motion, and I hope that everybody back in northern Ontario pays particular attention to that part of it. I don't think you were here, Vic. He was really giving it to you guys on that interim supply motion. I really liked that part of the speech; it was great.

I also really liked the part of the speech where he talked about northern Ontario jobs. I can tell you that in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, we've had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the whole province, if not nationally, for about the last four years. It was interesting to listen to some of the Toronto members who talked about how their kids were leaving the province to get jobs. Well, this isn't the first time this has happened; this isn't new. People have left Ontario and people come to Ontario to get jobs. This is not a new phenomenon.

I really like the idea that the member highlighted the fact that in northern Ontario—I can tell you for my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan for the last four years, economically, we've been doing very, very well. One simple example is 1,200 more jobs in the last four years at one manufacturing facility, Bombardier, that was down to about 250 jobs when we were elected because the Conservatives had decided they were no longer in the mass transit game. We came into the mass transit game in 2003, and it has led to 1,200 more jobs in Thunder Bay.

To no surprise for the member, though, there is a part where I want to take a bit of offence at his remarks. He talked about how mining is getting ready to take off and made the comment that it has nothing to do with Liberal policy. Well, I'm not going to debate that here and now; that's fine. But he went on to say that unlike forestry, the jobs are coming back, and sort of side-swiping and blaming the Liberals for what happened in forestry. I listened to that argument for nine years. I've offered to debate any member, any time, anywhere on the forestry file. Nobody has taken me up on it. Speaker, it's just the opposite: We had nothing to do with the lost jobs in forestry. I still look forward to, perhaps, when somebody from the third party will take me up on the opportunity to debate that in Thunder Bay—Atikokan or in Toronto or wherever they'd like.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to congratulate the member from New Liskeard for great thoughts, a great speech. You're right: Northern Ontario's resources and wealth are going to be the wealth of Ontario. That will be the success of northern Ontario—and the rest of the province—in spite of the government and in spite of the throne speech. Good for you, folks, because that is the heart and core of where the wealth of Ontario comes from.

Another thing I'd like to mention that is not in the throne speech but is very important, and that I mentioned a bit earlier, is property rights and the fact that they weren't mentioned in the throne speech and are never mentioned or acknowledged by this government. It's the

basis of any western democracy and the success of any country.

I'd like to mention another example of a person who—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence, would you like to take it outside? You've got quite a quorum going there. I can hear you over the speaker. So if you guys could keep it down, I'd appreciate it. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Lorna Greatrex owns a farm in Renfrew county that she inherited from her father, who died at an elderly age. It's—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Would the member like to retract that statement?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pardon me? Will you stand up and retract that last statement you made?

Mr. Mike Colle: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Lorna Greatrex inherited her father's farm in Renfrew county, Mr. Speaker. It's a 300-acre farm where she grew up. She and her two brothers wanted to sell the farm to do some estate settlement. They had a buyer who wanted to buy the farm. Unfortunately, he withdrew his offer because he found it had a land use designation placed on it as a result of the Endangered Species Act. They had wild ginseng on their farm, and this was going to mean that the use that this man—he wanted to subdivide the farm and make use of it and develop it. He couldn't do that, so he withdrew his offer. The effect for Lorna's family was that the family farm has no market value. This is a result of a land use designation from government, from the Endangered Species Act specifically. Their wealth was taken from them. This was in the public interest, but the Greatrex family had to pay the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure, actually, to stand up and just to comment on my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane's 20-minute speech around what the throne speech is actually about. I think that we can all agree that it is a mission statement. A mission statement is a clear message to the rest of the province about what you're going to do, how we're going to serve the people of this province and what the strategy in place is. Clearly, there is a missing component, which is the strategy piece, and there's a lack of substance. In fact, I think if you scratch the surface of the throne speech, you get more surface, and that is a problem.

We have a very different approach than the other party. We're trying to make it work. The people of Kitchener–Waterloo, in the by-election, gave me a very clear message, and I think they gave this House a very

clear message. They said, "Get to work for us. Get some results for us."

It's no secret to the rest of the province that we have a jobs crisis in the province, that the energy sector is a mess. If you were here in question period, tempers are flaring. But, quite honestly, it's chaos. We need some answers and we need some clarity.

We've been very clear with the public. We have five priorities. We've put home care on the table for consideration, not for conversation, because I think people expect a little bit more action and less conversation. We've also put forward the auto insurance issue. I want to tell you, that is an issue that speaks to the general affordability of life in the province of Ontario, because people cannot afford for those rates to continue to go up.

Ontarians who are on OW and ODSP need a break, they need to be able to keep that \$200 when they earn it, and we have a responsibility to ensure that they can live their lives with integrity.

That's our approach. We're going to try to make it work throughout this throne speech process. And then, the budget process—well, that's another story, isn't it?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to comment on the remarks by the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane. A good member, and we welcome him to the House; it has been a pleasure to get to know him.

He says in his remarks he's interested in working together. To use some of his own words, he says, "We were sent here to run the government; we weren't sent here to create chaos."

Even in a minority Parliament, the remarks of the member say very clearly to Ontarians that responsible adults are still making their decisions at the provincial government level. That should be encouraging for all Ontarians.

Even as mining and forestry come back, to use, again, the member's words, "We have an opportunity to see whether or not two visions of how Ontario's future will unwind can possibly arrive at a consensus."

Ontario's throne speech is that vision. The budget is a plan we can discuss. Now the PC caucus, of course, has dealt itself out of Ontario's future. They've said that they're going to vote against a budget that hasn't even been written. So maybe the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane and his colleagues can share enough in common with the government to craft an action plan to take our 13-million-member Ontario family a step or two closer into that future.

I welcome very much the member's thoughts and insight. He has stood up and been very measured in his remarks and very responsible in his remarks throughout his time in our Ontario Legislature. I say let's keep looking at what makes sense. I think we should, if we do that, come up with a vision that Ontarians can understand, that Ontarians can share, and that will be a road map for this province going ahead in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane has two minutes.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd first like to thank the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

To the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, I agree with some of the things he said, not all. I think there are things we can do to make things work better in the forestry industry. I've got a mill in my riding that can't seem to get wood even though they've got a ministerial directive. There's a thing where we've got, basically, government policy definitely not helping.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's a problem.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's a problem. That's a problem we could fix.

1750

As far as us having a shared vision with the government and walking hand in hand down the garden path, I don't think that that—we were sent here, all of us, to help run this province. From our side, yes, we aren't saying no before the budget's written because you know what? That doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense.

What we've done is, we've laid down five things that are achievable that will give immediate results to the people who desperately want some leadership. That's what we're doing here.

So here are five things that will make a difference in your life. Are they everything we would deliver if we were government? No. But they're five things that would make a difference. Those are five things that we can vote for. But the endless dialogue and conversation and feel-good bills, that's not something that we're going to continue to support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me. I'm happy to speak on the throne speech.

I read the throne speech over, and picking up on a comment that the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane said, he referred to—quite properly so—the throne speech as a mission statement. It was a vision statement, and I quite agree with the member opposite's characterization of what a throne speech is all about.

When we read through the throne speech and we try to discern what the mission statement is, what the vision statement is implicit in the throne speech, what is it? I read through the throne speech, and it's broken down into four or five headings. The first heading set out and emphasized in the throne speech was “A steady hand and a bold vision.” What do you discern from that comment, a “steady hand and a bold vision”? Well, it's quite clear that the steady hand is a reference to the Premier's and this government's commitment to keep an eye on the books of the province, to balance those books, as we've said, over a period of a few years and to recognize that the province has to be fiscally managed in a very, very responsible way. That's the steady hand part of it.

The bold vision part of it is, if we get the economy in order and we manage our finances well, we will be able to act on the bold vision that we have for Ontario. And what is the bold vision?

The bold vision is set out in the next heading in the throne speech, and it's entitled “A sense of community.” A sense of community means treating everyone in Ontario fairly, no matter what their socio-economic status is, no matter what their health status is, no matter what their education needs are, no matter what their ambitions are for themselves and for their families. The bold vision part of the throne speech is to enable all Ontarians, whatever their circumstances, to enjoy their life, to maximize their participation in our cultural, social and economic life to the maximum.

So it goes full circle, then, back to the steady hand mission statement in the throne speech, and that is that we can only achieve that bold vision to better everyone in Ontario if we've got a rock solid economy. Those are the first two commitments in the throne speech.

The throne speech then goes on—another heading—and gets in a little more detail about just what this bold vision is. Well, the throne speech speaks next of a “New sense of community.” You know, for a long time—and it's probably also evidenced in this chamber itself because alas, it's no secret that the last little while in this chamber, and particularly the last number of months, there's been a lot of rancour in this chamber, and a lot of that rancour is also reflected out in the streets of Ontario.

What the throne speech envisions as a mission statement, a vision statement, is that somehow all Ontarians are going to pull together to meet these challenges referenced at the beginning of the throne speech: the steady hand on the economy and the bold vision for our society. But do you know where we have to start to develop that new sense of community? The members of this chamber have got to demonstrate leadership right here within these four walls with these three political parties here: the Liberals; the official opposition, the Conservatives; the third party, the NDP. If we can't pull together in this chamber with a new sense of purpose, with a new sense of community, with a common vision about how we're going to restore and fix our economy and how we're going to make life better for all Ontarians, if we can't do it here, what are the chances of being able to achieve that ambition outside of this chamber? That's why we, as individual members in this chamber—whatever our political parties, our responsibility as a political party and our responsibility as individual members of provincial Parliament representing our respective ridings—have got a real added responsibility to demonstrate leadership in that regard. That's the whole spirit of the throne speech.

The throne speech then goes on to speak on a third topic, elaborating on this sense of community: a fair society. It gets into a lot of details about what we will do in health care, what we will do in education, and what we will do in my ministry, which is aboriginal affairs, what we'll do to improve the lot of the aboriginal community, Métis and Inuit.

The throne speech, then, to come back to the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, who hit it right on the head, is a mission statement; it's a vision statement. I hope that when we're debating this throne speech, we will recognize that that's the job of a throne speech: to fire up our collective imagination, to put the challenge out there, especially in these trying times, the challenge that we in this House exercise that leadership; that we expect all Ontarians—whether they're in the business community, in the health care community, in the teaching community, in the construction community, in the public service—to all join hands with us and get things right in this province, both the economy and our commitment to all of our citizens. They go hand in hand. They cannot be separated.

With regard to the messages in the throne speech, let me just reference a couple of comments that have been made in the press. Here's Mark Wales, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. This is his reaction to the throne speech: "I really look forward to working with ... [the] Minister of Rural Affairs and ... [the] Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food to make sure that we take what is the number one industry in this province—agriculture, agri-food and agri-business. So I look forward to the opportunity to work with this government and making sure that we can get things done better for everyone."

Carol Wilding, the president and CEO of the Toronto Region Board of Trade: "Toronto Region Board of Trade is encouraged to hear the government is committed to addressing our region's infrastructure challenges. As the government said in the throne speech, we can no longer be mired in political rhetoric nor waste our time stuck in traffic. The question today is not if we need new revenue tools, but which ones."

I have a handful of quotes here from the Ontario builders' association, hospital CEOs, a cross-section of our leadership in the community, and they have all commented positively on the mission statement and the vision statement in the throne speech. We, as members of this House and members of our respective political parties, should get together and exercise leadership in this regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 6 o'clock, the minister will continue when this debate continues later on.

Debate deemed adjourned.

1800

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Halton has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer received on March 7 from the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation concerning the Niagara-to-GTA highway.

The member has five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may take up to five minutes to reply.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday, March 7 of this year, I asked the Premier why, when she was Minister of Transportation, she told Burlington residents that the new highway across the Niagara Escarpment, a biosphere reserve, which would gouge another gap through that precious piece of land—why she told people that that highway through the Niagara Escarpment and through north Burlington would be cancelled when she had no intention of cancelling this option.

She said, "What I said was that I acknowledged that there was a lot of concern about the corridor that was being identified for that road. What I promised was that we were going to do everything possible to make sure that we had an integrated transportation plan for that region.... and how can we make sure that public transportation is part of any plan going forward? That's what I said to the people of Burlington, Mr. Speaker."

Well, Mr. Speaker, the facts don't quite jibe with that. The press report of the time—the meeting was held on July 26, 2011, at Springer House in Burlington. This is what the Premier said when she was Minister of Transportation at that time. First, "Wynne assured local politicians and citizens' groups gathered at the round-table meeting that the provincial Liberals aren't moving forward"—not moving forward—"with a 33-kilometre highway that connects Highway 403 in Ancaster to north Burlington."

Second, she said, "People need to move around. There is congestion on the roads and we need to address that. But we don't need to destroy environmentally sensitive land in order to do that."

Thirdly, she said, "The fundamental thing I hear is that people in this community are very concerned about a road that will disrupt a sensitive environmental area that really is the basis of the quality of life in the area. That's why our government stepped back from this."

Fourth, she said, "That detailed work"—on that highway route—"has not been done because we're not moving ahead with it."

Fifth, she said, "We have to be much more intelligent about the decisions we make on transportation."

Five times she denied the highway was going forward. St. Peter only denied Christ three times.

A year later, on July 10, 2012, a Burlington Post article said, "What a difference a re-election campaign can make."

"Almost exactly one year ago"—and then it goes on to say the five promises that the now Premier, then Minister of Transportation, made. "But we don't need to destroy environmentally sensitive land" to build that highway. "That's why our government stepped back from this." "Because we're not moving ahead with" this road. "For Burlington and Halton residents ... Wynne's words elicited a huge sigh of relief"—applause at the time and votes in the coming election.

"Last week"—this was July 2012—"Halton regional councillors were shocked to learn from Ministry of Transportation (MTO) project coordinator ... that a new highway corridor running through north Burlington to connect Highway 403 to Highway 407 is still on the books."

The coordinator "explained his department has never been formally directed to remove any of the options for a new highway that predated Wynne's promise that Halton escarpment land would be preserved.

"There has been no change in direction," he "told flabbergasted regional councillors...."

Last month, in February 2013, at a public meeting in Ancaster, the MTO held its wrap-up meeting for the environmental assessment process. The highway across the escarpment and through north Burlington continues despite the Premier's promise to cancel it for political purposes. The people of north Burlington were misled.

I'm saddened that politics in Ontario have fallen to this level. When revealing all the written documents on this broken promise, it is clear Ms. Wynne, now Premier, then Minister of Transportation, misled the people of Burlington for political advantage. To the Premier, this highway is not needed, this highway is not wanted. Do the right thing: Cancel the highway as you promised to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. I would ask the member from Halton to withdraw the one statement he made.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Now the parliamentary assistant has five minutes.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today to have the opportunity to respond to the member's question. Let me say that I don't agree with very much that he said there, but it is an issue—I will agree with him that it's a very important issue to the region of Halton and certainly to the city of Burlington and to the town of Oakville, as well.

It's so important—I remember when I was still on regional council, the Progressive Conservative Party announced that it wanted to build a highway through the Niagara Escarpment and I was the first person to rise at the region of Halton and suggest that this might not be a good idea for the region of Halton, that a highway through the escarpment was probably not a good idea and that the Progressive Conservative government that proposed it should maybe rethink it.

Now, our government knows that a strong economy needs a modern transportation network. It needs to move goods; it needs to move people. People have to move to jobs; people have to move to purchase, for trade and all

sorts of other things. A modern economy also needs a transportation system that simply gets people home and back quickly. In order to deal with the anticipated growth within the province, and specifically the GTA, our government has been planning for the future all over the province. Not in this area, but let me be very clear: Unlike the previous government, unlike the Conservative government, we are not building a highway through the Niagara Escarpment.

Now here's a quote, though, that I have for you from the PC leader, the current PC leader, Tim Hudak, who says not only is he in support of it, it's actually a priority for the Ontario PC Party. He says that building a highway is the preferred transportation and a priority for the Ontario PC Party. Anybody that perhaps thinks that needs to be checked up on, if you go to 1310news.com of May 2011, here is the quote from PC leader Tim Hudak: "I've committed to building a new highway along the mid-pen corridor. It's what I've stood for."

Now, I appreciate the honesty of the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. He's told us exactly where he stands on this. He can stand or he can fall on that idea. I'll tell you, in the region of Halton it's not perceived as being a very good idea, and I think that the PC leader might want to go back and rethink that.

Environmental assessments, by nature, are required to look at all the available options that make sense. We have to have all the facts on the table, and all of the options being on the table is the only way you can make a good decision. So how we tackle the problem of congestion—I don't think anyone denies it's a major trade route, it is congested and we need to have a solution to that for the health of all our communities. But in order to make those decisions it's absolutely critical that we assemble all the facts.

So let me be clear again, one time more: No matter what PC leader Tim Hudak wants, this government is not building a highway through the Niagara Escarpment. We're listening to the community through the current consultations on the recommendations that are being made by the Ministry of Transportation. These include highway expansions, widening existing highways and only building new ones where it makes sense for Niagara and the greater Toronto area.

Once again, we are not in support of PC leader Tim Hudak's suggestions, ideas, priority and commitment to build a highway through the Niagara Peninsula.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): End of business for the day. This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1809.

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No. 15

N° 15

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 21 March 2013

Jeudi 21 mars 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 21 March 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 21 mars 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Good morning, Speaker. On this beautiful second day of spring, when the sun is shining outside, and the day after happiness day, the government is pleased to call government order G11. And let's hope the happiness continues.

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 7, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It is a pleasure, on this day after happiness day, to rise and speak with the House—and especially the Attorney General today—on Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services, or, as I like to call it, an act to divert attention away from actually fixing anything Ornge and addressing real issues.

Bill 11, when we get down to it really, when we read it, is nothing more than a piece of non-substantive window dressing that this government is so good at putting forward. It will do little, if not nothing, to fix the costly, messy scandal at Ornge. And I can guarantee that we of the opposition will not let this bill or the McGuinty government get off the hook for all the scandals that have plagued this government over the past 10 years, and certainly not Ornge.

The cost of Ornge: Now, when I say it's a costly scandal, and we say it's a costly scandal, I think it's clear. We don't just mean money-wise, through the hundreds of millions of dollars given to Ornge by this government only to be squandered away through ineffective service and questionable financial practices; that speaks for it-

self, really. I mean, we have these wonderful helicopters that don't even serve the purpose for which they were bought. That, in and of itself, is questionable.

But I also mean that the scandal involving Ornge is costly to the well-being and safety of Ontarians. Let's look at the disturbing numbers: Ornge received government funding to secure a land ambulance service to transport a projected 20,000 patients a year, starting in 2008. Instead, the land service transported only about 15% of the projected number—certainly not an overachievement, just in case anyone was wondering—at an average per patient cost that was nearly as high as the cost to transport a patient by air. It was costly financially, but even worse, it was costly to the health and well-being of Ontario's citizens and indeed endangered many people's health. When you endanger one person's health, you're endangering families.

Let's look at some of the other numbers. Ornge borrowed almost \$300 million—\$300 million—primarily to finance the purchase of helicopters and airplanes and its new head office. Even though Ornge's own analysis indicated only nine helicopters and six airplanes were needed, Ornge purchased 12 new helicopters and 10 new planes. Sounds like another example of irresponsible and wasteful spending during a time when this province can ill afford to have such abusive spending.

This wasteful spending on a mismanaged program that was clearly left without real oversight from the ministry responsible for it is made even worse by the amount of debt and deficit it has contributed to. At the end of the day, that's really what we're talking about: money that's coming out of taxpayers' pockets at a time when we can't afford it.

Recently, we saw the MoneySense rating of cities, where a province like Alberta, I think, had five in the top 10 and not one Ontario city in the top 10. That's not right. I think Ottawa was actually in fifth place, but down from first three years in a row. Why is this? Why are we seeing our cities and our province plummet to the bottom? This shouldn't be the case. We used to lead our Confederation; we don't anymore. This scandal is really a great example of what's happening and what's wrong in Ontario today.

Right now, like I said, we're looking at a massive, at least \$12-billion, deficit—maybe \$30 billion if we don't take bold measures to get it stopped. Ontario's debt is on track to double to \$411 billion by the 2017 fiscal year—\$411 billion. That number is something that people can't even comprehend. I can't comprehend it—I don't know what \$411 billion looks like. I don't think anyone here

has ever seen that much money. It's ridiculous. It's so hard to comprehend that it's even hard to get people's attention about it sometimes. It comes at a time when our new Premier has used the word "debt" a grand total of four times in the House in the past 10 years. Since I've been elected, I think I've used it 40 times or more.

Interjection.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Probably more.

With rising debt and deficit, over half a million Ontarians are unemployed. Toronto itself has a 7% or 8% unemployment rate. Each mistake and each scandal this government makes, going back to the OLG scandals, the Ornge scandals, eHealth scandals and gas plant scandals—these aren't little scandals; these are big ones. These are ones that really go to the core of what this government is about, and not one apology, not one action to make it right except for window dressing. That's abominable.

With rising debt and deficit and over half a million Ontarians unemployed, each scandal this government makes is that much more costly. It contributes to the fiscal problems that have already been created, and that's why we need greater change than bills that lack real substance, as this one does.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It takes away from health care and education.

Mr. Rod Jackson: It takes away from health care and education, as the member from Northumberland—Quinte West said.

Even worse, this wasted money adversely affects the safety of Ontario citizens, and that's really the crux of this. We can't forget, when we talk about health care bills or even education bills, what they're really there to do: benefit our citizens, our children, our seniors. Why? Because the helicopters purchased are completely inadequate in allowing paramedics to do their jobs. The organization of Ornge was so convoluted and a wicked web that no one knew what the other arm was doing—what the other 20 arms were doing. You can't even administer CPR in these helicopters. Wouldn't you think that's a primary function, a service you would provide in an ambulance, whether it's an air ambulance or a land ambulance? Maybe it's something that should have been looked at.

People should feel reassured when they are in need of help, when they see a bright orange helicopter of the Ornge fleet, instead of worried about their safety. It should be like an angel coming out of the sky, not something they're concerned about. We've seen tons of dangerous mismanagement throughout the Ornge organization, almost from day one.

0910

What I find equally disturbing is the fact that when it assigned the operation of Ontario's air ambulance services to Ornge, we were all told by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care that there would be proper oversight of Ornge. I think we can all agree almost unanimously in this House that that did not happen. I've got news for you: The buck stops there—right over there.

You actually have oversight when you're in government. That's exactly what the owls and the eagles are in this chamber to remind us of: that you have oversight over your government. You can't put a layer of bureaucracy to protect you. At some point, someone over there has to stand up and be counted and take responsibility for the things that go wrong in this government. You know what? People appreciate that. What they don't appreciate is you trying to run away from your scandals; they'll actually appreciate it if you own up to them. Maybe that's something you should consider.

We were promised standards that would be set and checked to ensure accountability on both the fiscal and patient care levels. Like I said, this obviously didn't happen. Despite the fact that the minister has had the power to appoint a supervisor from the very beginning of the Ornge saga, and despite the fact the minister had the power to intervene at Ornge under the original Ornge performance agreement as well as under the Independent Health Facilities Act, taxpayer money was blatantly wasted and lives were put at risk because somebody over there didn't want to take responsibility for the mess that was at Ornge. Yet you had the power to do it. Why not? An examination of the facts shows there was a clear lack of oversight at Ornge; it led to this mess in the first place.

Just recently it was revealed that Ornge took out a \$10-million life insurance policy on former CEO Chris Mazza. Taxpayers were directly responsible for half a million dollars in footing this bill. The health minister responded by saying she had no idea that this money had been wasted—no idea. It's got to leave you wondering just how much more taxpayer money is being wasted that this ministry is unaware of. This is a huge ministry, I'll grant you that. But if you can't handle it, get out of the kitchen. If you can't handle the heat, get out of the kitchen.

Ornge has been plagued with bloated salaries, such as the \$4.6 million in salaries, loans, bonuses and cash advances that the former CEO took from the company. How do you not notice that? I mean, how does that go under the radar by a government that's supposed to be accountable for these things? It's not a little bit of money; we're talking about a lot of money. They made him, I think, if not the highest-paid civil servant, definitely the highest-paid civil servant in the province, for running an air ambulance service. It's a very important service, but let's talk about value for money. We certainly weren't getting it there.

The news of this waste didn't come to light until it was too late, because of the lack of oversight and the simple irresponsibility of this government to take hold of a problem it created. You can't light a fire and then call yourselves heroes when you come in and put it out. It took so long for this mismanagement to come to light precisely because this government failed to ensure the proper amount of oversight was in place. Not only do they shamelessly spend tax dollars; they often don't stop to make absolutely certain the money is dedicated toward improving the lives of the great people in this province.

I learned a lot of lessons from my dad when I was in business for myself, and one of the main ones he taught me is, "Rod, the one thing to have a successful business"—and I apply this to my own office, and I hope we apply it when we're government—"is you need to inspect what you expect." This isn't getting done over there, and that's a basic management tenet. If you don't know that, you can thank me later for letting you know that that's a great piece of advice for managing your business.

There are tons of examples of scandals like this that are the result of lack of oversight and lack of responsibility and really, in some cases, potential misfeasance of government power. It's unacceptable, and it is more proof that the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government lacks the organizational and managerial know-how to ensure the well-being of some of Ontario's most important sectors.

In addition to the Ornge scandal, Ontario also faces the eHealth scandal. Remember that one? And I think if anyone starts talking to some of the bureaucrats in the Ontario civil service right now, you'll see and hear about a real level of frustration that this project still isn't off the ground the way it should be. It's ridiculous the amount of money that's going into this and not having any results come out of it. By the way, why are we investing in something that we have internal, in-house expertise to do? It doesn't make any sense. I don't know how many friends you have over there that are in this company that's been assigned to get eHealth off the ground, but it's disgusting.

This mismanagement and scandal in the health care system is equally matched by the mismanagement and scandal plaguing Ontario's energy sector under this government. The decision to close down power plants in Oakville and Mississauga in order to save a few Liberal seats is costing the Ontario taxpayer hundreds of millions of dollars more than they didn't need to spend. It's just another example of scandal. This continued mismanagement is leading to the skyrocketing hydro bills that households and local job creators are forced to deal with right now, only adding to the already difficult economic times that everybody is facing. As my respected colleagues have mentioned, we currently have around 500,000 people out of work in this province. With continuing scandals under the management of this Liberal government and with energy prices continuing to rise under this government's watch, I don't see any end in sight. Something needs to change, and I'm thinking it's you guys.

Now, instead of taking responsibility for their mistakes, as I mentioned, and admitting their failings, Liberals seem more concerned with saving face than actually fixing what they broke—say and do whatever you need to keep on winning elections. In fact, the McGuinty-Wynne government is so concerned with their own political well-being that they allowed charges of contempt to be brought against the Minister of Energy before even making the slightest effort to guarantee their own accountability to the public.

This government and its Premier continued to play games with Ontarians by deliberately filing an out-of-order motion to expand the justice committee's mandate. By filing a motion they knew would be ruled out of order, the government demonstrated it's more concerned with superficially saving face than it is with being genuinely transparent and accountable. It's really easy to own up to what you did wrong, and you know what? This scandal would be over like that. It may not be pretty, but it would be over and it wouldn't linger.

Just recently, many members of the PC caucus stood up for hard-working taxpayers to ask for members of this cabinet to take responsibility for their mess. Instead of taking their responsibility and duty to Ontario seriously, they refused to apologize for their scandals, once again proving that they care less about Ontarians and more about themselves. There's no shame in apologizing. This is outrageous. What happened to the accountability, the transparency and the honesty that Ontarians expect and rightly deserve from their government and from all of us sitting here? For all the people that we represent, there should be no shame in apologizing for mistakes that we've made, and I think, probably, most of you would admit there have been mistakes made.

The theme of a lack of accountability continues with this bill and with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I truly believe that all members, even those across the aisle, can agree that wasted money and inappropriate spending like this has no positive outcomes for Ontarians; not one. I commend the minister for, at the very least, acknowledging that the money spent in outrageous salaries is exactly that: it's outrageous. But again, like I said, it's one thing to set the fire, but to call yourself a hero for coming in and putting it out—that's a whole other story. Yet in the same breath, the minister claims to understand how deep these problems run. She absolves herself of responsibility repeatedly. Repeatedly, she defends her role and insists there was nothing she could have done to stop it.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: She should do the honourable thing.

Mr. Rod Jackson: She should do the honourable thing—but in failing to recognize these problems earlier, this is exactly her problem. The minister should be familiar with everything in her ministry, especially when we get up into the hundreds of millions of dollars. And not admitting clear fault for the depth of scope of this scandal is another example of how this government refuses to be held accountable for any of their actions. That, I find appalling and disappointing, frankly. Instead, we get just another attempt to superficially tape over a problem that they created. Just like filing an out-of-order motion or shuffling cabinet, or just like trying to apply a fresh coat of paint to a broken government, this bill offers no real solutions. The problems this province is facing—and it's a shame that this government refuses to even acknowledge their own mistakes.

0920

Beyond the fact that Bill 11 does not actually get to the bottom of the serious problems that we can all agree

are happening at Ornge, it also fails on a whole raft of other levels. The single biggest failure is the so-called whistle-blower protection section, which actually does little to protect the whistle-blower. By failing to provide across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers and by imposing limits to individual protection and on who they can approach with information, the whistle-blower protection section really does nothing at all.

Without clarifying who a whistle-blower can resort to, this government has tried the equivalent of sealing a leaky pipe with scotch tape. In section 7.7, relating to whistle-blowers, Bill 11 only implies protection will be given to whistle-blowers who come forward to the ministry itself—that's like the wolves guarding the gate—or inspectors, investigators or special investigators. I wonder what this means for anyone who might wish to talk to the media, since the media are not dealt with in this act at all. Instead of granting whistle-blowers important protections across the board, it limits their ability to come forward in the first place. That's not my idea of fixing a problem. It's a mismanaged attempt that clearly won't work if it's applied today. You know what? Maybe that's a mistake or an oversight, and maybe that's something that the minister can take back.

Brave individuals with information regarding mismanagement and incompetence in government-sponsored programs need to feel safe to come forward and share everything they know. That's how our government is going to work best. That's how the system that serves the people who elected us and put us here will be served best. In my own riding, in Barrie, I know of an employee at Ornge who wants to come forward. He won't come forward because he knows his job is in jeopardy. We've already seen at least one person lose their job over their exposure of what's happening at Ornge.

How long will the status quo be allowed to continue before important changes are made—real changes, substantive changes? This bill does not achieve an appropriate level of protection. Safety is impossible with this sham Liberal bill. Instead of letting potential whistle-blowers know they're valued, it tells them that maybe they'd better not bother, because their government can't put together a functioning whistle-blower protection program.

This bill also fails to provide an appropriate level of oversight. I can't deny that it tries to do so by making provisions for the possibility of provincial representation on the board and by giving the minister power to issue directives, but nowhere in the act do I see an assurance that money will be monitored closely. And nowhere do I see assurance that the boards of directors and future CEOs will have their salaries publicly reported and recorded.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's the same old, same old.

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's the same old, same old.

It's high time that the Liberals learn that you can't just throw money at a problem to make it go away. It's the type of thinking that has brought this province into this giant massive debt. It's also time that Liberals learn that

Ontarians will not stand for non-substantive legislation designed to try to divert attention away from the rotten cores of many of the scandals—which have become characteristic of this government. We've wasted enough time and enough money on these irresponsible games being played by this government, and all at the expense of the well-being of Ontario citizens.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to speak in this House and respond to some of the comments from my colleague from Barrie on G11, the air ambulance act. He had one line in his remarks that is going to stick with me for a long time. It explains a lot of stuff, and I'd really like to compliment him on it. It's, "You can't light a fire and call yourself a hero when you go put it out." I couldn't agree with that one more.

At the end of his remarks, he talked about whistle-blowers, and that's a very important subject, not only in Ornge—the problems at Ornge have pretty well been identified, you know. There's a laser-light focus on Ornge. But there are all kinds of other problems out there, because it's a big government, a big ministry.

I'm going to put a laser-light focus on another one in my riding, where I've got nine whistle-blowers being sued by a hospital which is funded by the LHIN, controlled by the ministry, and they're all saying, "Well, there's nothing we can do." What do you mean there's nothing you can do? If the CEO of the hospital wants to step down and sue those people himself for defamation, go ahead. But for the CEO and the hospital board to use public funds to sue whistle-blowers—what kind of message does that send to the other people who know what's going wrong in this province?

The thing that really bothers us on this corner is that this is a huge scandal, but in all our businesses—I also run a private business—if there's a big problem, you look for ways to make sure you learn from that problem so it doesn't happen the next time. That's how you make your business better. That's how you make the province better. They haven't learned that, because they talk a good talk, but when you see actual cases where public funds are used to sue whistle-blowers, they haven't learned the lesson.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's a pleasure to stand today to talk about this legislation. I would like to thank the member from Barrie for his comments. What his comments don't do is come up with solutions, creative solutions to move forward and to move the province forward.

When you talk to people, especially when you go into communities like Don Valley East that I represent, you talk to people in Ontario, they always come back and say, "Well, what are we doing to move forward as a province?" This government has looked at any problem that exists within government, and we're looking for creative ways to move forward. I think the member from Barrie

has not come up with a single solution to move forward, and I think people are sick and tired of partisan politics in this province.

The opposition's job in this House is not to just criticize and to watch; it's to come up with solutions and to work with government. I think people are sick and tired, in this province, of an opposition that is so blinded by the pursuit of power and so blinded by partisan politics that it doesn't have the ability to look and to come up with creative solutions to move forward.

I think people in Ontario want to move forward, and I think the opposition needs to tune in to what people in this province are talking about and actually come up with solutions. Come up with some solutions and come over to our committees—your committees—and come up with ideas so you can strengthen legislation. Don't just come in with criticism, criticism, criticism; come in with solutions.

This government has acknowledged that things in the past have not gone perfectly. We've acknowledged that. We've said that, time after time. If we see a problem—and I think it's the role of government: If there's a problem, come up with some solutions. I'd ask the opposition and the third party to look at ways within this legislation to find some solutions and work with this government so it benefits not only this House, but the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Word and deeds, Speaker; the distance between words and deeds. We, on this side of the House, saw that when we voted in solidarity to call for an all-party select committee of the Legislature to uncover the truth around the Ornge scandal. The members of this party opposite locked arms against that motion, and despite promises to honour the will of the Legislature and the all-party special select committee vote, they have continually refused to back the cause of transparency and accountability.

This government does not want answers; it wants silence. It does not want collaboration; it wants compliance to its will. We should not simply make do with the appearance of integrity, Speaker. Ignorance should not be considered a best practice.

In closing, I would like to salute the brave whistle-blowers and dedicated journalists who woke up this government to its shortcomings and reminded it of its duty. I would like to applaud and commend the dedicated efforts of my colleague from Newmarket-Aurora and the member from Nickel Belt, who have taken point on this file over the last several months and who have increased understanding of the complex and convoluted drama. I'd like to acknowledge, as well, the many other members, past and present, who work here in this House and in committee, who have helped open a window into the shadowy world of Ornge.

We do not yet have all the details, Speaker. We may never know the full extent of the truth around this case. Apparently, the party opposite would be perfectly okay with that. We, on this side, are not.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was very interesting to listen to the member from Barrie, who was able to show his depth of understanding as to what went wrong at Ornge. Then, he was able to contrast this with the bill that we have in front of us, the bill that we are supposed to work on, that is supposed to fix what went wrong at Ornge. But nothing in this bill will change one iota of anything.

Yesterday, we happened to have the new CEO of Ornge come as a deputant for the public accounts committee, where I sit. He basically echoed what the member from Barrie is talking about: that what we have in the bill right now is not going to change what's going on at Ornge. The changes that needed to happen at Ornge have been done without passing the bill. Plus, if you look at what's in the bill, it is so incompetent at doing what it says that it wants to do.

0930

We all agreed that had the government listened to the whistle-blowers that started to go to them directly in 2008—we're in 2013, Mr. Speaker; five years ago, whistle-blowers started to go to the ministry. You know what happened to them? They lost their jobs. And then they were supposed to have the money to sue their employers to get their jobs back? Who are we kidding here? But yet, what we have in the bill is not going to change anything. If you blow the whistle, you will still lose your job; you will still be without a penny to go to court, hire a lawyer to try to get your job back. They haven't learned, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Barrie, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I appreciate all the comments from my colleagues.

I think it's important to take notice of this bill, because I'd like to think that the government has the best intentions with Ornge. We have to believe that everybody wants the best for this province. That's why I think it's so shameful that this bill fails on so many levels to provide the real mechanisms we need to fix Ornge. It really is a fundamental thing.

The health care system is huge. It is a massive bureaucracy, it is a massive government ministry. It represents almost half of the total budget of the province. So in that respect, Ornge is actually a pretty small piece of it, but it's also a very important piece of it, and it's representative of what's wrong in our health care system and what's wrong with our government. It's an opportunity for this Liberal government to take hold of a problem, acknowledge the problem, talk about the problem amongst yourselves, if you have to, and fix it—really fix it.

You know, you've told us that you agree that Chris Mazza was wrong, and he managed this company right into the ground for his own benefit and the benefit of several others. We know that; you know that. You have an opportunity to take this bill and put real substantive change into Ornge, and make sure that it provides the best possible air ambulance service that this province

absolutely deserves. Without it, people are going to die, eventually. That's what it boils down to—

Interjection: They have.

Mr. Rod Jackson: People have died.

It's a shame that this bill has an opportunity to fix it, and it's not. That's where I'm really disappointed. This is a second go-around to fix a problem that really should be fixed quite easily, and it's not. I have to wonder why. Is it because you're afraid to acknowledge that it was a problem, or is it because you don't have the capability to fix it? Both worry me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to you and good morning to everybody, on the day after happiness day.

I'm one of those individuals that chooses—I make choices, and I choose to be happy every day. I choose to do things respectfully and honourably because that's one of the biggest reasons why I'm here at Queen's Park on behalf of the people in Algoma-Manitoulin. I can only hope that I live up to their expectations and what they're anticipating hearing from me while I'm here. We all have those choices. We all have the opportunities to provide solutions. I think that my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane has provided a solution to enhancing this bill, G11, the Ambulance Amendment Act, so now it falls on the responsibility of our friends across the way to listen to that solution.

I'm going to be providing another solution this morning. Over the course of my notes this morning, I hope that you can absorb the theme that is being put across to you, and that you take that in and you take it with serious consideration.

As many of my colleagues have stated, there are many elements that could be added to this bill to make it stronger and give Ontarians some piece of mind, knowing that this will never happen again. It brings me great comfort and confidence that my colleague from Nickel Belt, the health and long-term care critic, has been working tirelessly on this issue to try to get the answers for Ontarians, and bringing in some type of accountability, and it is through her work, along with the colleagues that we have who are going to be involved with this at the committee stages, that I'm going to be able to get the answers that I'm looking for, for people back home in Algoma-Manitoulin.

While this bill allows cabinet to appoint representatives to the board of designated air ambulance service providers and appoint a supervisor or special investigator, I am disappointed that there is no mention of Ornge being subject to freedom of information anywhere in this bill. That is a suggestion.

Again, this bill could have gone so much further if the government really wanted to commit to providing appropriate accountability measures. Here's a suggestion: Ontario's Ombudsman will not have oversight of the agency. The lack of accountability and transparency is something I take issue with, as providing Ombudsman

oversight is the ultimate commitment to accountability. Although this bill allows the minister to issue directives to air ambulance, I fail to see how that will change how things have been done in the past. When reading this bill, it becomes clear that all the Liberal government is committing to is keeping the old status quo going on and on.

We have seen the Auditor General's report on Ornge, and we have heard committee testimony. Not only does this bill come up short, it is being implemented completely after the fact and is clearly a reactive approach. It appears to be more of an attempt to change the channel, but the bill still falls very short of being able to accomplish this.

It's been clear that the new Premier has been taking notes from the old Premier and the Minister of Health by trying to push the blame on everyone but themselves for the issues that have happened at Ornge. The Liberals have been trying to use the fact that Ornge was a federally incorporated entity; however, I don't see how this prevented them from providing the necessary oversight to avoid this mess. After all, Ontario's hospitals are federally incorporated, and this has no impact on oversight.

This is a prime opportunity to create a bill that could prevent such disregard for taxpayers' dollars and ensure that it doesn't happen again; this opportunity has been completely wasted. I am unclear as to how this bill will actually do much at all to prevent us from seeing this time and time again.

Blaming the opposition for this mess is not productive; creating useful legislation is. What is most disappointing is that this bill could have done so much more—so much more. So if this government can't even admit that they were wrong, that they had a role to play in creating this disaster, how can we trust that they are trying to find ways to actually assure Ontarians that this will not happen again? We need transparency; we need to make this transparency standard practice instead of waiting for the next scandal to further disappoint Ontario taxpayers.

Vous savez, le gouvernement a une chance maintenant de reprendre un nouveau cours, une nouvelle direction. Comment est-ce qu'ils peuvent adresser la crédibilité que la province est en train de ressentir avec le scandale qui est arrivé à travers notre système de santé? Et puis, si on continue à pointer les doigts et on continue à blâmer les autres, on n'est vraiment pas en train de préciser la direction, et puis le blâme qu'on devrait regarder sur soi-même. Pour faire un changement, il faut qu'on reconnaisse l'erreur qu'on a faite à travers des actions qu'on a prises comme un gouvernement et les actions que vous n'avez pas prises.

Il y avait des chances à travers de tout ce dossier où il y aurait pu avoir des chances de prendre une action corrective, positive, pour éliminer beaucoup des pertes qu'on a subies à travers de ce scandale. Mais la première étape, c'est de prendre la charge et la responsabilité comme le gouvernement de se planter les deux pieds et puis dire : « J'ai fait erreur; on corrige. On prend une nouvelle direction dans la province. » Mais ce n'est pas

ça que la province a fait. On a tout fait pour blâmer les autres droit. On a blâmé les chiens et les chats—tout le monde qui était impliqué dans l'affaire, et puis on n'a jamais regardé à soi-même pour dire : «On a fait erreur.»

On est ici pour faire quoi? Une suggestion que je vous donne—et puis ça va être beaucoup de sujets dont je vais parler aujourd'hui : il faut qu'on donne le droit à l'ombudsman d'avoir ses doigts, ses yeux, ses mains, son temps à regarder et à aller dans cette situation—aller par en avant. C'est la seule façon qu'on peut regarder comment on peut résoudre tout ce pétrin où on est présentement rentré.

0940

So how can we trust a government that is clearly continuing to move forward with no transparency? When organizations know they are under FOI, they will undoubtedly behave in a different manner, one would think, so why is it not explicitly provided under this legislation? Yes, we are talking about mismanagement of money—taxpayers' money. That is a huge, huge concern alone. However, what is more worrisome is that air ambulance deals with life-and-death situations. This is a critical organization, and the services they provide are of the utmost importance. When things go wrong, families deserve to know the facts and have closure, knowing that this will never happen again, especially in such high-risk scenarios. Depriving these grieving families from getting this information and closure is unacceptable. Depriving Ontario families from knowing this will not happen again is, again, unacceptable.

Ontarians would agree that organizations such as Ornge need to be under the mandate of the Ombudsman. This oversight of health care organizations is so desperately needed. When the lives of Ontarians are hanging in the balance, why wouldn't we want our provincial figurehead of accountability to have oversight into these important organizations? Had the Ombudsman had oversight, perhaps—perhaps—we would not have been in this mess today.

It is clear that this government is not taking steps to be proactive in preventing this type of situation from happening again. But they can't even take the time to be reactive and acknowledge the fact that the Ombudsman should have had oversight into Ornge the whole time. Ombudsman André Marin has expressed this concern time and time again. We know that without Ombudsman oversight, there will be no credible accountability.

I want to read a statement that the Ombudsman had sent to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and to the critics of both opposition parties as well. It reads:

"There is no doubt that any steps to increase the accountability of the air ambulance service is welcomed. Indeed, in the wake of the many stories of maladministration horrors that have plagued Ornge, sound public policy to bring proper oversight to this organization is still sorely needed.

"While moving in the right direction, measures such as the establishment of an Ornge patient advocate and

Bill 11's creation of a new bureaucracy of 'special investigators' are insufficient to provide much-needed scrutiny, and continue to shield Ornge from Ombudsman oversight. My office remains unable to address any individual or systemic issues involving Ornge.

"The Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario is a unique resource to support the Legislative Assembly in holding government accountable. It is there to allow the provincial Parliament to scrutinize government bodies. I cannot think of a more persuasive case for this than Ornge.

"Special investigators,' under Bill 11, would enjoy authority similar to that of my office when it investigates the more than 500 ministries, agencies, boards, commissions, tribunals and corporations that fall under our jurisdiction. But there is an important difference: The 'special investigators' would report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. They would not be independent of government. Far from being watchdogs, they would operate on a ministerial dog leash.

"The newly created office of patient advocate has been positioned by the government as an additional oversight body that alleviates the need to extend Ombudsman oversight to Ornge. The Ombudsman is a fully independent officer of Parliament, established by statute with a mandate to investigate individual and systemic issues. By contrast, the patient advocate reports to an Ornge vice-president, not even to the board of directors. He or she resides within the bowels of the organization and cannot be expected to investigate any issue with institutional credibility. When this position was publicly advertised, the first line of the 'Duties and Responsibilities' in the job description noted that the incumbent would be required to '[I]nvestigate, resolve, document, report organization-specific patient and visitor compliments and complaints'.... Needless to say, a position that involves reporting compliments back to management ought not to be confused with the role of the Ombudsman.

"The recent and proposed changes to Ornge are often put forward as responses to the Auditor General's March 2012 special report, Ornge Air Ambulance and Related Services. Yet nowhere in his report did he recommend"—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask the members who are having a discussion over here to keep it down?

Mr. Michael Mantha: —“(a) a new bureaucracy of 'special investigators'; (b) the creation of a patient advocate residing deep within Ornge whose partial responsibilities include being a clearing house for 'compliments'; or (c) the maintenance of the status quo with respect to the exclusion of any role for the Ombudsman.

"Every year, our office responds to tens of thousands of complaints, consistently demonstrating its value to elected representatives and the public. As 'Ontario's Watchdog,' we are the gold standard in keeping government maladministration at bay"—gold standard. "It simply does not make sense to perpetuate our exclusion in a bill that purports to bring credible accountability to Ornge. I would respectfully request your support in

bringing the necessary amendments to Bill 11 to ensure that it meets the purpose for which it was presented to the Legislative Assembly.”

Again, the suggestion is, let’s look at Ombudsman oversight. I hope the other side is listening. We need Ombudsman oversight. It is the only way this bill will provide some type of accountability and transparency.

The patient advocate role reports to Ornge’s vice-president, not even the public or the board of directors. This is a total lack of transparency and a serious concern for the public. How can we possibly call this credible accountability? Why do Ontarians not deserve the highest form of accountability into this organization after the mess we just went through? How could the patient advocate maintain a neutral party in conflict or complaints when they report directly to the company’s vice-president? It seems to me as though this is a sad attempt to convince the public that oversight has been added, but in reality the government could have actually added real accountability by allowing the Ombudsman oversight.

So why have the Liberals not taken this step? Clearly they are not really serious about preventing similar catastrophes from happening again. They are not giving Ontarians what they deserve. Instead, they are trying to trick them into believing that real changes have been made—again, window dressing.

In Algoma-Manitoulin and much of northern Ontario, we know how many of our services are being cut. We often travel great distances to seek medical attention, and there isn’t funding for important health projects that our community so desperately needs. I speak to constituents who travel many hours away—often three times a week—for dialysis or other medical treatments, often on dangerous roads and in poor driving conditions, especially in the winter months. This can be very costly and time-consuming, especially for individuals whose illness prevents them from working. For these folks forced to survive on disability, their income is inadequate to cover or front such costs as travel. They depend on the Northern Health Travel Grant to cover these costs, but significant delays for reimbursement are causing serious problems for many northerners.

I have raised the plight of a constituent from Chapleau in the Legislature before, who must travel to Timmins for dialysis three times a week and has experienced long delays with the Northern Health Travel Grant. She must drive 12 hours a week and stay in Timmins overnight when the road conditions are bad. It is an exhausting and stressful position to be in. But to make matters worse, she is waiting as long as three months to be reimbursed and is being forced into debt, waiting for her cheques.

I hear from constituents who have to continuously cancel medical appointments because the conditions of the roads are too dangerous to travel on. This means many people are not able to rely on being able to see medical professionals regularly. This is a serious health concern, and no doubt a serious commitment to providing more accessible medical treatment could provide great relief for the region.

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Many northerners cannot even rely on driving to their medical appointments on properly-taken-care-of roads in the winter months because of this government’s decision to further privatize snow removal on road maintenance and services. I hear these stories continuously and view these pictures daily, and the government has been made aware of this serious issue.

It’s difficult to explain to them how this government squanders health care dollars with zero accountability or transparency, and the health care situation in the north is severely deprived. This is money that could have been used to make services more accessible to northerners, but instead the money is once again wasted.

It is sickening for them to know that not only have these health care dollars been squandered but that there have been no real steps taken to ensure that this will not happen again. Leaving the opportunity open for this to happen again will only further devastate health care dollars that should be used to fix serious problems we have in our health care system. Northerners should be able to have peace of mind, knowing that health care dollars will not be wasted in a future similar situation and that priority will be put on improving access to health care. However, this is unlikely to happen because of the lack of commitment to real, credible accountability.

Northern and rural communities need to know that when there is an emergency, there is help close by. This has not always been the case for these folks. These people can’t even rely on being able to get to the closest medical centre, because of the state of the winter roads.

Without transparency in health organizations, northerners are going to continue to suffer. The money is there to create a health care system that makes patients a priority, but clearly the current leadership is failing to do this. This government needs to be accountable and put patients’ needs and our health care service first. This is an opportunity to do right and create real change, providing greater accountability with the best answers possible.

If this government is really serious about preventing this type of catastrophic situation from ever happening again, they would not have made all the provisions aimed at the designated air ambulance provider who is currently under Ornge.

Why could more not be done to ensure scandals like this do not occur in these government-funded agencies? Couldn’t this have been an opportunity to learn from past mistakes and prevent this from ever happening again? How can we sit here and leave open the opportunity for history to keep repeating itself? This bill is ultimately a useless public relations exercise that does not add Ombudsman oversight or provide real transparency or accountability.

When will people again be the priority for this government? The people of Ontario deserve more. This was a perfect opportunity to show Ontarians that the government will learn from its mistake and do better. But the opportunity has just been wasted again, and no real change or commitment will be done or made in this case.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his comments. He's an honourable member of this House who, I believe, has the best interests of his community at hand while he's serving in this House. But there are a few things that I think I'd like to challenge him on, and one is the piece around the changes in the legislation.

I think the Minister of Health has come up with a series of changes within the legislation that I believe speak to the type of government that this government in this House is. It's a solution-focused government that's looking at ways to constantly improve government, and that results in the betterment of all Ontarians.

I think it's a very different type of approach than the official opposition's approach. I was taken aback at the last budget, where—I don't even think it was an hour after the budget was introduced, and the Leader of the Opposition was dismissing it. I know now that he has publicly said that he's not going to support the budget, and the funny thing about that is, the budget hasn't even come out yet. The budget hasn't even come out, and the opposition has said they're not going to support it.

Could you imagine a government—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Could you imagine an opposition that is serving the residents of this province, who actually dismisses a budget even before they see it? I think it speaks volumes to what type of opposition we have.

The job of the opposition in this province is to do two things: It is to be a watchdog and to criticize this government, but also to work with the government to come up with creative solutions to move this province forward. I think they've failed in doing that.

Some of the changes that are there within this legislation are very positive—if I have an opportunity the next time I speak, I'll bring those up—but I think Ontarians know exactly where we want to go, and it's what this side of the House is doing in order to bring the changes that they want to go in. We'll see that change coming soon with this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened patiently to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. I thought he brought a true story of his community and how important that air ambulance service is for northern Ontario. I would say it is an important service for all Ontarians, when and where it is needed.

The real point here is the scandal that has plagued Ornge. This bill here, out of respect to the minister, should really have been introduced after the hearings that are being held right now. At the hearings themselves, the inquiry into the scandal at Ornge, I think there will be some solid input that would improve the bill. All of us

here want to improve the efficiency and also eliminate the waste in Ontario, the scandalous waste.

An example of that—it wasn't so much covered by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, but I think I'll try to cover it here. Here's an article that I saw recently in the paper. It's out of, I believe, the Toronto Star, which is a fairly Liberal-friendly paper; in fact, it is a Liberal paper. The title here is, "Insurance for Ornge Head Cost \$450,000." This is a waste of \$10-million life insurance. Here's what it says here; this is by Rob Ferguson: "Ornge took out a \$10-million life insurance policy on its highly paid former chief executive, Dr. Chris Mazza, in the latest example of" excessive spending and trouble at the "air ambulance agency...."

This is what our critic, Frank Klees, was saying. This is another example of—I believe he was making about \$1.5 million, plus he was on the take, really, from other hospitals who were using him as a consultant. That's what we want: to get to the bottom of this and open it up so we can all have a look at it. The committee is dealing with it.

The problem with this Bill 11—it's the second attempt at it, and they prorogued the House so that we couldn't deal with it at that time. I agree with certain sections. The protection for whistle-blowers is an admirable feature. The minister already has that authority—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: It's great to be here today, as always, and it's always great to hear my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin speak in this House, because he always speaks with heart, compassion and integrity.

When it comes to this bill, again—I've put my responses forward before; we'll put them forward again. We need to see Ombudsman oversight. We need to see whistle-blower protection. We need to see this expanded outside of this particular file, where we know there will be good scrutiny in the future, to make sure that all ministries and agencies are covered in this province.

I think back—I became politicized in the days of Mike Harris, and I remember a minister named John Snobelen who is on record as saying they were going to create a crisis in education—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You know who really did it? Laurel Broten did.

Mr. Jonah Schein: There's still a crisis in public education, but there was certainly an understanding that there was an intentionality behind that government when it came to breaking government, in fact, because that's the ideology of conservatives in this country: to break government, to destroy public services. I don't know; the jury's out whether the government feels the same way, if they're intentionally working to destroy public confidence in our public institutions or if they're just messing this up by mistake. Either way, I would agree with my colleagues over here, with the Conservatives, that they're doing a good job of destroying public confidence, and that is a tremendous issue.

I heard the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration take the new talking points in talking about the oppos-

ition, about partisanship and so forth. We have real differences about where we stand; I'm here with the NDP because I believe strongly in public services. We need to restore faith in these public services. We need to make sure that people know that when they spend their tax dollars, it goes into public services, that we can build transit in our cities, that we can invest in our health care. And this government is doing a really good job in undermining that public confidence right now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

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Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I listened very carefully to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. I was trying to think back to when my first experience was with air ambulance services. One of the first jobs I ever had was at Sick Children's Hospital. It was one of my first jobs, and one of the first things I noticed when I worked there was that a couple of times a day the building would vibrate, because there is actually a helipad above the hospital. That was my first experience of that emergency service delivering people who were critically injured and landing, and families who expected to get the best service.

Nothing has changed about the air ambulance service. I think there are still families around this province who rely on that service, and certainly the member from Barrie talked about what people's vision of that service is. I don't think that's changed. People still expect the most competent, the most professional individuals using those services to transport somebody who's critically injured at a very traumatic time in people's lives. They expect the service to work, and certainly I think this legislation is about restoring faith and building that service to a new level of accountability and transparency.

I think that the member from Algoma-Manitoulin talked about the unique challenges in the north. Whether it's roads or access or the communications system, it's always a challenge in the north. I respect the information that he brings to the table, and I think that those are conversations that we need to have on an ongoing basis.

I think amending the Ambulance Act is about strengthening that public service that people have grown to rely on and need at a very critical time in their life. It's about supporting those 600 front-line employees who work every day to protect our families, arriving when we're at our most needy and vulnerable and providing a service that helps save our families and gives us confidence going into the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, I'm a happy kind of guy. I want to acknowledge the comments that came from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the member from Durham and the member from Davenport. I'd like to touch on one of the points that he raised, as returning faith into our public services. I also appreciate the comments that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing had to offer.

We expect our services to be there, and we expect them to work. What I'm trying to raise, by having Ombudsman oversight through this process and included within this act, is exactly when those services don't work, where something happens along the way, where there are questions that have happened, where we need that third set of eyes to oversee that issue. That is what we're asking for in my notes that I was doing this morning.

Again, we all know where fingers are being pointed. I don't want to sit here or stand here and lay blame anywhere. I don't think that's very productive to anybody in this House. We all know what happened. Let's recognize what has happened, but let's really fix it. Let's really sit down and look at how we can fix this—not just some of it, all of it—so that we can make sure that we have real whistle-blower protections that are going to be there as individuals like my friend from Timiskaming-Cochrane has indicated, that doesn't happen in his area; that we have real oversight so that the province and people who are back home who are looking at this and wondering, how does this happen?—so that they have the opportunity to answer questions; and that our gold standard, which is our Ombudsman, has the opportunity to have oversight into these matters.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to join this debate, and again, I want to say, as I said a few minutes ago, I'm very grateful to the paramedics and the pilots and all those front-line staff at Ornge who, from the very beginning and for many years, continue to put our patients first—our family members. I understand it's about 600 employees who work every day on the front lines, and I think this legislation that we're talking about today is about changing, moving it to a new chapter and putting us on the right path forward. Certainly we've heard from the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care that there have been some significant changes in the leadership, and it matters that you have the right people at the helm.

They've hired Dr. Andrew McCallum—he's the president and CEO—and they've hired Rob Giguere as the chief operating officer. Dr. McCallum was trained as a military flight surgeon, so he knows what he's talking about, and he's the former chief coroner of Ontario.

As well, Ornge has also appointed a new board of directors, and that was led by Ian W. Delaney. He's the chairman of Sherritt International. As well, they've appointed a quality-of-care committee under the direction of Barry McLellan, president and CEO of Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. They know a lot about emergency care, so Dr. McLellan will be helpful in looking at that quality of care.

This year, they submitted their first quality improvement plan to build on the achievements of previous years, and certainly a quality improvement plan is a very extensive exercise. It's like a strategic plan for your health care going forward. Under that new leadership, those quality-of-care projects and the leadership are going to be putting patients first. That's about respecting taxpayers and valuing transparency.

As well, we've also got Ornge's first patient advocate; that is Denise Polgar. It's a newly created position, and it's unique in the field of air ambulance and medical transport. That patient advocate is someone who supports patients and their families, as well as working to resolve their concerns about patient care and service.

As I said earlier, when you're in the middle of a traumatic event, when someone you love has been critically injured, sometimes the communications with how you transport somebody, when they arrive, what kind of services they get, are mysterious to families, and so somebody like a patient advocate will help assess those complaints, help the patients and the family navigate through a very foreign system when you aren't used to anything in health care of that nature.

Miss Polgar will also advocate for operational improvements based on the lessons that she learns from that patient complaints process, and that will be guided by the principles of the new patient declaration of values.

Miss Polgar is bringing to Ornge extensive experience in both emergency services and the hospital setting. I understand she began her career as a paramedic, so she knows what it's like being on the front line. She spent nearly a decade with Brant county ambulance. Since then, she's worked as an ambulance dispatcher and a trainer, a program developer and coordinator for emergency telecommunications, and, most recently, as an injury prevention specialist and educator for the London Health Sciences Centre.

Miss Polgar has a strong understanding of the health care sector, and she's collaborated with a variety of hospitals and community agencies to implement positive and measurable change.

At the same time that we have, at Ornge, instituted a new patient advocate, Ornge has also installed new medical interiors in its helicopters. They've expanded service in Thunder Bay. They've established a dedicated patient flight service in northern Ontario, which obviously is something that would be of interest to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

As well, as I said, they've submitted their first quality improvement plan, and they have created a whistle-blower policy. I think certainly we've heard from a few of the members this morning about their concerns about the policy. At the end of the day, this policy is meant to help employees fulfil Ornge's mandate of compassionate care with the highest-quality standards of ethics and professionalism. The policy will be implemented through the appointment of Grant Thornton, a leading Canadian accounting, audit and business advisory firm, as the independent ethics officer for Ornge. As someone who is responsible for the independent ethics officer, Mr. Thornton will be receiving and tracking employee disclosures in a safe and confidential manner. He will then examine and assess each disclosure to determine if further steps are warranted. The firm has full discretion to conduct investigations and make recommendations, and will ensure that the complainant is protected from reprisal.

These are significant improvements, but we understand that there is more to do.

We believe that this legislation takes the next step in restoring public confidence to Ornge. If passed, this bill will entrench protections for employees who disclose information to an inspector, an investigator or the ministry.

The bill will allow the government to take control of Ornge in extraordinary circumstances through the appointment of a supervisor or to appoint special investigators, just as we do with our hospitals.

As well, the bill would allow the government to change the performance agreement with Ornge at any time.

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In addition to this legislation, our government is also proposing to make Ornge retroactively subject to freedom-of-information requests. This is a very important distinction, because it's in keeping with our commitment to transparency across the broader public sector, and these measures represent common ground between the government and the opposition.

The steps we're proposing today will provide the strong oversight we believe is necessary to ensure a brighter and stronger future for the future of Ontario's air ambulance service. We are very committed to improving the culture at Ornge, and the new performance agreement strengthens government oversight and improves patient care. Significant improvements to the accountability and the transparency have been made by posting executive expenses and salary ranges online.

New policies and procedures on conflict of interest and whistle-blower protections have been introduced. As I previously stated, we appointed an independent ethics officer to receive, investigate and track employee disclosures as part of the new whistle-blower protection policy.

It's all part of our government's well-established track record on extending the coverage of the province's access and privacy legislation, including bringing under the legislation Ontario hospitals in 2012, Cancer Care Ontario in 2010, publicly funded universities in 2006, and the energy sector, including Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation and public utilities, back in 2004 and 2005.

Our government believes it's important to continue to take steps to ensure that citizens have knowledge and transparency because we believe their right to know is foremost in considering requests for information and in making government information more publicly available.

At the end of the day, this legislation is about improving patient care. As I said, Ornge hired a patient advocate to work with patients and their families to address concerns and to advocate for operational improvements. As I said, we've installed new, improved interim medical interiors in the fleet of AW139 helicopters after extensive consultation with the front-line staff, the people who actually use the facilities. We obtained Transport Canada's approval for the interim interior for that aircraft.

As well, we've taken steps to introduce a third line of paramedics at the Thunder Bay base to help ensure 24/7 service for northern Ontario. They've created a dedicated flight service for the Sault-Ste.-Marie-to-Sudbury corri-

dor, increasing patient access to out-of-town treatment, and they've launched a pilot project in Ottawa on the use of critical care land vehicles in place of a helicopter for certain calls when it's deemed that they're appropriate for patient care.

Some other achievements that Ornge has made, which probably haven't received the attention that they deserve, is that we've declared a new declaration of patient values; as well, they have developed an online patient relations portal and guaranteed feedback to patient complaints.

As well, they have redesigned programs to expedite the paramedic training and education process, including a new program to fast-track training upgrades for primary care paramedics to become advanced care paramedics, because at the end of the day, the people who are on the front line—the best education that they have results in better care for someone who's in the midst of a crisis.

As well, Ornge consolidated three operational divisions under one chief operating officer. They consolidated all operational and scheduling functions into one team for improved coverage and service effectiveness.

Ornge has developed and implemented certification material for their operations control centre. They've obtained a three-year operator certificate from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for air and critical care land ambulance operations.

I think it's clear, Speaker, that these changes indicate that Ornge and the board are on the right track. The bill that we're debating today will help ensure that it stays on the right track, because we believe that accountability and transparency are very important.

The services at Ornge are part of our province's first-rate health care, and certainly I value that. In a community that has had very high growth—Brampton—Springdale, the riding that I represent—health care is very important, whether it's land ambulance or whether it's air ambulance. Everybody believes that better health care is what we, as a government, need to deliver. We've seen the results of those investments certainly translate into better wait times, certainly at William Osler Health Centre.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'd like to introduce Rabbi Yermi Cohen and his son Mendy, who are here, as they come every year, to present me with the shmurah matzah in anticipation of Passover, which starts next week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, and welcome.

Ms. Cindy Forster: All of my guests aren't here yet—they're still being processed—but I want to welcome 60 visitors from my community. They're here to listen to the health care issues here today. I want to introduce some of them. I have Frank Campion, who's not here yet—he is a councillor from the city of Welland; Mary Ann Grimaldi, a councillor from the city of Welland; and Dan Fortier and Michael Petrachenko, both councillors from the city of Welland.

I have Heather Cross and Christine Simpson, both ONA members—local coordinator, Local 26—from the Niagara area.

I also have Pat Scholfield, who is an advocate for health care in the Niagara region, and I have Sue Hotte as well from the Niagara Health Coalition.

I welcome them all to Queen's Park today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Deputy Premier. Yesterday I asked about missing gas plant documents, and the Premier answered, "All that has been asked for has been provided."

In sworn testimony Tuesday, cabinet secretary Peter Wallace said the committee has not yet been provided with all the documents related to the Mississauga and Oakville power plant cancellations.

Speaker, the Premier is telling us one thing and people swearing an oath are telling us the opposite. We now have proof that cabinet members said we have all the documents when they knew there were more, and we have proof that they said the total cost of Oakville was \$40 million when they knew it was hundreds of millions more.

Deputy Premier, can you explain the difference between those statements and those sworn under oath?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I have to say that I am delighted that the justice committee work is well under way, delighted that Mayor Hazel McCallion was there this morning, and I'm very pleased that the scope of the committee has been expanded to include tendering, planning, commissioning, cancellation and relocation.

Speaker, this is a committee of this Legislature doing its job. I think it's doing a thorough and very good job, and I look forward to the committee doing their work and completing their work. I think we all have a lot to learn from that work that is under way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We do have a lot to learn. In fact, we have been learning a lot. What we've learned so far is that this gas plant scandal has many tentacles and it's feeding off of many ministries. For instance, the cabinet board itself is deep in this. The energy minister is busy working on retractions of earlier statements. The House

leader sounds like a broken record, and you will soon learn that the Attorney General is now involved. So let's add the finance minister to this mix.

The OPA swore under oath about the hundreds of millions of additional dollars. You've got a budget coming up soon. What amount will your government be listing in the budget for the gas plant scandal?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very happy to go back to—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're going to bring it right down. Thank you.
House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to go back to the first question that was put forward by the honourable member about Mr. Wallace's testimony and provide him with a quotation from Mr. Wallace yesterday: "It is my belief that the Ministry of Energy acted in good faith in searching for and producing documents in their possession that they understood were responsive to the committee's request."

Mr. Speaker, the honourable member says that I've turned into a broken record, so let me put something new out here for everyone here. Let me quote Mayor Hazel McCallion at her very thorough, thorough appearance before committee this morning. She said, "The government listened to the people. The people of Mississauga are fed up of hearing all of this controversy at Queen's Park over something that they wanted cancelled. The government agreed to cancel!"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Cabinet secretary Peter Wallace told us that government is driving the bus, and he also made another revelation to the justice committee on Tuesday. He told us that the Ministry of the Attorney General has launched an investigation into the accusation of political interference with the OPA.

Your government failed to disclose any information of the Attorney General's investigation into whether or not a former Liberal staffer turned bureaucrat directed the OPA to withhold documents from members of this House. Why was this investigation being discussed in secret, conducted in secret, and why didn't your government at any time tell the public about this further twist to this gas plant scandal?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to finish the Hazel McCallion quote, to begin: "The government listened to the people. The people of Mississauga are fed up of hearing all of this controversy at Queen's Park over something that they wanted cancelled. The government agreed to cancel it. Come on. Let's get on with the business of the province, folks."

As to the other item that was raised, Mr. Wallace appeared in front of the committee. Yesterday, he answered questions in that regard, and that is the place for this type of discussion to go on. The committee has an opportunity to call witnesses and to look into any matter related to it. But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, I think maybe some

of the fishing expedition should be put to the side and they should focus on some of the important issues before the committee.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the finance minister this morning. Mr. Finance Minister, we know that cabinet was privy to a memorandum of understanding on September 24 of last year outlining the fact that the costs for relocating the Oakville power plant would well exceed the \$40-million cost that your government has repeatedly given the House.

While we're quoting the mayor of Mississauga, your mayor, she also told the committee this morning that it was going to cost somewhere between \$800 million and \$1 billion to cancel the power plants. How does she know that when you don't know that, because you were in cabinet when that MOU was circulated?

As the man with his hand on the purse strings of the province, as the former chair of the Liberal platform committee, exactly how could you allow members of the government to claim that the cost of Oakville would be \$40 million when you knew that that number was wrong?

Hon. Charles Sousa: What I do know is that the siting of these power plants needs to be readdressed, and one of the things that has come out as a result of these deliberations is that we have to do proper setbacks and ensure that we're assessing these things more appropriately. We've listened to the people of Mississauga and we've listened to the people of Oakville, and I've done my job in representing the constituents right around the area. None of these plants were actually in my riding. But what's important is that we protect the interests of the public right throughout the province, and that's what we're doing as a result of these initiatives.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Finance Minister, the accountability has to start at the top on this issue, and you're the man now in charge of the money for the province.

The MOU clearly showed that you and cabinet knew, back on September 24, that the costs would exceed \$40 million, and you kept trying to sell that number to the members of this House and to the people of Ontario. Are you telling this House, as the Treasurer for the province, that the finance ministry has no idea how much money it's going to have to spend to cover the cost of the Liberal Party's decision to cancel the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville?

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finance Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, to the House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The one factor that the honourable member is failing to mention is that his party was opposed to the gas plant themselves. In fact, this morning Mayor Hazel McCallion said, "I think all parties would have cancelled it; there's no question about it.... In fact, I would say that the citizens were in touch with both the

Conservatives and with the NDP, no question about it. They not only appealed to the Premier and the present government; they definitely appealed to the Conservatives and the NDP. There's no question about it."

So I guess, Mr. Speaker, we have a committee that's looking into this matter. But will the Conservative Party come forward with their costing, with their policy analysis, with the work that they did before they went out and made YouTube videos about how they were going to cancel this project? Why are they leaving that part out when they ask these questions?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: The government fails to understand the crux of this issue.

I'll go back to the committee testimony this morning from the mayor of Mississauga, Mayor Hazel McCallion, the mayor of the community where the finance minister now lives. The mayor said this morning that the citizens of Mississauga, the staff, the council and the people of Mississauga were prepared to accept a plant in the right location. Was the plant cancelled to save seats? she asks. "Who can deny it?" she says. Obviously it was. "It should have been cancelled" well "before a permit was issued," not in the middle of an election campaign to save five Liberal seats. It should have been made before the campaign even started.

She also says—get this—that Mississauga residents "are not interested in wasting taxpayer money." What's your answer to that?

Hon. John Milloy: I think what Mayor Hazel McCallion said this morning—to repeat it—is, "The government listened to the people. The people of Mississauga are fed up of hearing all of this controversy at Queen's Park over something that they wanted cancelled. The government agreed to cancel it. Come on. Let's get on with the business of the province, folks."

The honourable member talks about politics; well, maybe he can explain the politics of his leader going the day before the election and making a YouTube video where he stood surrounded by adoring candidates and proclaimed that this plant, if he became Premier, would be "done, done, done."

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. People in Ontario want to see a balanced approach to balancing the books in your upcoming budget. New Democrats have put forward a plan to close some corporate tax loopholes so that we can balance the books and make the tax system a little more fair. Can the minister tell us whether he's ready to move on these proposals?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you for the question and as well for your input. It's critically important that we do work together in putting forward a budget that meets the needs of the public and the people of Ontario.

The proposals made by the NDP are being taken seriously. Tax avoidance programs by the corporates that exist is something that we are looking into, and in association with your support, we have already written to Minister Flaherty—his budget's coming out today, as you know. We've already had some of these things addressed. We also have to take a look at the underground economy as well as some of the other particulars that you put forward. We do appreciate your input.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the minister, but last week we learned that the finance minister had written his federal counterpart about tightening corporate tax compliance. That's one very small step forward towards balancing the books, but it's a baby step. We've identified measures that will save \$1.3 billion annually, and thus far the government has only followed up on the one that saves the least amount of money. Is the minister saying that he plans to ignore this billion-dollar tax loophole, or are you going to act on all of it?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are taking a look at everything being brought forward, as well as putting forward even other initiatives that we think are important to take a balanced approach in our budget. We have to take this balanced approach because we want to ensure that we reduce our deficit and make a zero deficit by 2017-18.

We do have a sensitive recovery. We have to take proper steps. We cannot take extreme measures, because of that sensitive recovery, but we are moving forward. We're looking at tax avoidance. We're looking at some of the restricted tax credits that you've brought forward, as well as auto insurance and the employer health tax exemptions. All of these things are being taken into consideration.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Minister, with respect, I think nothing we have suggested should be described as "extreme measures." What we are saying is that people are expecting some basic fairness as we push to balance the books. They're being told that nurses have to be fired; they're being told that school repairs must be delayed and that the cost of living has to keep climbing. When they see that the government plans to roll out a new tax credit to hand a tax break to Ontario's largest corporations so they can get cheaper meals and drinks, they just don't think that's fair.

Will the minister commit to taking some real steps to balancing the books in a balanced way and close all of those corporate tax loopholes that we have identified?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I think what I'm saying, and what we have to understand, is that we have to take those measures in order to take a balanced approach. What I'm saying is that we have to take these things into consideration. That's why we're taking consultations. That's why we're going around the province and meeting with constituents. That's why SCOFEA is doing its role as well, and that's why we're reaching out to the opposition. We need to work together in order to present a budget

that speaks to the fiscal impacts that appear before us right now, but also about the economic impact in the long term and in the future. We have to position ourselves and build the foundation to benefit Ontarians in the long run. The points you bring forward are essential in those discussions. We are addressing them, and I do thank you for them.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Yesterday the new CEO of Ornge was at public accounts; that's Dr. McCallum. When we asked him about the Minister of Health's new air ambulance bill, he said that it would really not change anything from what is currently going on at Ornge. Speaker, the minister has brought forward a useless bill that will not prevent future fiascos in other areas. It is not going to do anything that is not already being done at Ornge right now. Can the minister explain how her bill will be effective, even when the CEO says the opposite?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I must say that's a rather disappointing question because I know the member opposite cares about improving quality of care at Ornge and across our health care system. What Dr. McCallum said was that he has already moved forward on changes at Ornge, but this bill is still an important bill because it does give the ministry more oversight powers. It does require more transparency. It gives us, if we ever need the power, the power to put in a supervisor. I hope we never need to use that power, but if we do need that power in the future, we will have that power, if the bill is successfully passed through the Legislature. I'm glad Dr. McCallum testified. I'm delighted with the progress he's making, moving forward on all of the recommendations, but we still need that bill passed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, oversight by the government is important, but the government did have oversight mechanisms. They chose not to use them. For four long years they were warned, and they did not use the oversight that they had. But now, as time goes by, it's becoming more and more obvious that the air ambulance bill is not going to change anything. It won't do anything to prevent another Ornge from occurring, and this is a real worry because right here, right now, there could be many little Ornges out there, but we wouldn't know. It's the same thing with the whistle-blower protection. The whistle-blower protection they have at Ornge right now is stronger than what's in the bill.

Did the minister hear what Dr. McCallum had to say? Will she admit that her bill is not worth the paper it's written on?

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I absolutely reject that interpretation of what Dr. McCallum has said. Dr. McCallum is leading us now at Ornge. There is a new era of accountability and commitment to patients at Ornge.

He did say that if he does his job right, we won't need to exercise the powers in the bill, and I completely agree with him.

So we are into a new chapter at Ornge that puts patients first. It protects taxpayer investments. There's a new quality improvement protocol in place. We are making terrific progress at Ornge, and I think everyone in this House recognizes that and celebrates that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I agree with the minister. A lot of the changes have already happened. They already have a new performance agreement. They've already signed on. They already have whistle-blower protection. You know the part that's missing? It's that we need to rebuild the confidence of the people of Ontario into Ornge. How do you do this? How do you rebuild confidence? You give them Ombudsman oversight, so that if I feel that Ornge did me wrong, I will pick up the phone and phone the Ombudsman, and I know that he will investigate, that he will be on my side and that he will help me. We need to rebuild the trust.

Will the minister agree to do the right thing: amend the bill and give Ombudsman oversight of Ornge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know we're making real progress at Ornge when the member from Newmarket-Aurora has this to say after yesterday's testimony by Dr. McCallum. The member from Newmarket-Aurora said, "I was encouraged by Dr. McCallum's testimony. I believe he was very forthcoming with information, and I believe we'll get the truth from Dr. McCallum.... I think that ... Dr. McCallum brings a brand new perspective to openness and transparency."

If the member from Newmarket-Aurora has that to say about Dr. McCallum, then I think we can all agree we've come a long way at Ornge.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Just before I come to the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, just a reminder that, moving forward, it's easier for me to hear. I just thought I'd let you know.

The second thing is, I've been hearing, lately, people calling people by their first names, and that is not a tradition in this place. I'd ask to remind members that we use either their title or their riding. It becomes personal, and it escalates the problem instead of bringing it down.

I will now recognize the member from Haldimand-Norfolk for a new question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yesterday at public accounts, the replacement for Chris Mazza, Dr. Andrew McCallum, confirmed Ornge air ambulance has gone in the red by \$2.5 million.

Minister, as you know, \$150 million a year flows into Ornge. Money wasted on Harley choppers, a speedboat, kickbacks for helicopters not suited for CPR, and now we

understand you are awarding employee bonuses of \$2 million.

Minister, how will this bonus bailout and how will the deficit that I just mentioned affect crucial operations at Ornge? How will it affect patient care? Are you planning cutbacks on essential services to pay for these bonuses?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: A year ago the new board at Ornge made a decision—a decision I strongly support—not to award performance pay for this year. That decision was appealed to HRSDC. Ornge lost that appeal, so they are, of course, complying with the ruling from HRSDC.

I do want to say that the new board at Ornge is doing a tremendous job. It is improving quality of care. It is enhancing access to care. We're adding new staff at Ornge, and I think the people of this province are extremely well served by the new leadership at Ornge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, they're going to have to make it up somewhere.

Minister, we have seen this sorry tale of house loans, kickbacks, money wasted on Harleys, on that speedboat—\$150 million a year of taxpayers' money—no transparency, no accountability and no oversight whatsoever. Now we hear of more cost overruns, a deficit and \$2 million in bonuses.

My question, Minister: Do you really know who's in charge of this file? You have not met with the new CEO, Andrew McCallum. You never did meet with the old CEO, Chris Mazza. We want to know: What is your plan, Minister? Are you hiding behind the sofa or just planning on sweeping this under the rug?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I just don't know where to start. Let me just clarify a few misconceptions.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, I told you I could hear you, and I do.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have met with Mr. McCallum. In fact, I've seen him earlier this week.

I tried to meet with Dr. Mazza, but he wouldn't come to the meeting.

You don't have to tell me—

Interjection: Who's in charge?

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: And he was out of his job shortly thereafter. I buy that.

Speaker, the member is telling us something we all know: that things were not as they ought to have been at Ornge under the old leadership. We have made significant changes. The entire leadership team is new. The board has been entirely—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The board has been entirely replaced. The new board is making significant efforts to recover some of the money that was inappropriately spent.

We're looking forward to receiving \$1.1 million back, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: So things are back on track at Ornge. Patients are getting the care they need, and it will continue to improve as we go forward.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question is to the Acting Premier. Today, the mayor of Mississauga, like the mayor of Oakville, made it clear that it took an election to get the Liberal government to listen to Ontarians who didn't want the Mississauga gas plant. After seven years of telling them it was impossible to act, an election made it happen. Why did it take an election for you to correct your mistake?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be helpful if we looked at fully what Mayor Hazel McCallion said. She pointed out, and I quote, "I think all parties would have cancelled it. There's no question about it. In fact, I would say that the citizens were in touch with both the Conservatives and with the NDP; no question about it. They not only appealed to the Premier and to the present government; they definitely appealed to the Conservatives and the NDP. There's no question about it."

The fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bantering back and forth when I'm trying to listen is not helpful. I would ask the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek to resist the temptation.

Hon. John Milloy: Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, all parties of this Legislature promised to cancel that plant. I think, again, Mr. Speaker, it's time that members of the opposition came forward to talk about their commitment, the policy analyses that they did, the costing that they did, because the fact of the matter is, this was a promise that was made by the opposition and it was kept by the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My goodness. Going back, just a reminder that there was only one party in this Legislature that proposed to put it there in the first place.

The permit for the Mississauga plant wasn't issued until May 28, 2009, five years after the Minister of Energy signed the agreement for the Mississauga gas plant. Will the Acting Premier admit that the government bent over backwards for private power companies, but it took some bad election polling to get results for families in Mississauga?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, let's take a little bit of a walk down memory lane. Mayor Burton, speaking about the Oakville power plant: "Would you like to

elaborate”—this is from my friend the member Mr. Delaney. “Would you like to elaborate particularly on the support Mr. Tabuns lent you in the drive to get the Oakville power plant cancelled?” Mayor Burton answered, “We enjoyed expressions of support from all parties, including Mr. Tabuns, and we appreciated the support of all parties.”

Mr. Speaker, what about Mississauga? What did the member from Toronto–Danforth tell Inside Toronto on September 26 when it came to the Mississauga power plant? “We wouldn’t build it.”

What about Etobicoke–Lakeshore NDP candidate Dionne Coley? According to Torstar News Service, September 16, she also pledged to fight the plant.

National Post, September 29: “... local NDP candidate, Anju Sikka, soon issued statements concurring with the new Liberal cancellation.”

Mr. Speaker, again: a promise made by them; a promise kept by us.

1100

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Phil McNeely: This question is to the Minister of Rural Affairs. Building and maintaining infrastructure across the province is important. It drives our economy and improves the quality of life for all Ontarians.

Building and maintaining infrastructure is not just a concern of urban municipalities; it also matters in small towns and rural communities. The infrastructure needs in rural Ontario can very much differ from those in urban municipalities.

Constituents in my riding and in neighbouring rural communities have heard of the government’s Building Together plan. Can the Minister of Rural Affairs tell us what this government is doing to ensure that we continue to support the infrastructure needs of small towns and rural communities in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you much, Mr. Speaker. I’ll try to be a little calmer today.

I want to thank the member from Ottawa–Orléans—a hard-working member. He had a wonderful career in the Ottawa area as an engineer, designing roads and bridges. He knows this file inside out.

As the member knows, a strong, healthy Ontario includes strong rural communities, which is why our government is committed to bringing their interests into focus. The new Municipal Infrastructure Strategy includes projects in virtually every municipality across Ontario, including most rural municipalities. There has been a great uptake. The province is making \$8.25 million available to 358 small, rural and northern municipalities in 2012-13, as well as providing \$750,000 in funding over the next three years for asset management planning to 37 consolidated municipal service managers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Back to the Minister of Rural Affairs: It is good to know that this government is seriously working to address the infrastructure needs of small towns and rural communities.

I know that investment in infrastructure has been unprecedented since 2003. There have been many improvements in communities across the province, and many critical infrastructure projects have been funded and are improving communities across the province.

The minister mentioned the Municipal Infrastructure Strategy. Can we hear more about this plan and what it will do to address the needs of small towns?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I’d like to refer this one to my good friend the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Our annual infrastructure investments now are a record in Ontario history. This year we will spend \$12.9 billion on infrastructure—about \$2.4 billion on highways in the north and rural Ontario. That contrasts to the party opposite that downloaded provincial highways onto them. As a matter of fact, this comes as very good news, particularly to the people in eastern Ontario, where the party opposite downloaded 42% of the responsibility. Some 42% of highways are now on the municipals, without additional solutions.

Our solution was to add \$90 million to help repair bridges and roads, in addition to the gas tax that supports transit in small communities like Orillia.

CASINOS

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, if we learned anything from the meeting that the Premier had with OLG bosses yesterday, it’s that we now know you both owe this House an apology.

Twice this week, you and the Premier have said that there is no special casino deal for Toronto. The Premier said that the same formula applied to every community hosting a casino. Yet despite those repeated assurances, the Toronto Star reports today: “... Paul Godfrey, chair of Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., said the agency will formulate a new casino profit-sharing formula equal for all.”

Minister, if there was no special deal, why is OLG going back to the drawing board to come up with a new formula?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are modernizing the OLG. We’re trying to do our utmost to generate more revenue to protect our services like health care, education and social services, and doing it in a socially responsible way. What we have before us is a formula that’s being used in the same format right across the province. We’ve made it clear that no municipality—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I’m getting conversations from all sides, back and forth, and it has nothing to do with the question—and if it does, it shouldn’t be happening.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you.

We've made it clear that there are no special deals for any one particular municipality. OLG is reviewing the formula to ensure that the principles of fairness and equality are done, and we want to make certain that all municipalities benefit from the restructuring and the modernization of our plan.

Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite: We are maintaining the same formula, and we are doing our utmost to ensure that all municipalities are treated fairly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Minister, it's clear that you and the Premier are in over your heads on this file. I repeat: You both assured, right here in this House, that the formula was the same for every municipality: "No special deals." That's what you said. Can you explain to the people of Ontario why the Premier and the finance minister have no clue what OLG was up to? Ontarians want to know who's in charge—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General, come to order. Second time.

Mr. Steve Clark: —the OLG, the international casinos? Because clearly you don't know.

Hon. Charles Sousa: What we do know is that we're modernizing the system, generating more employment and more jobs for the province of Ontario. We're trying to ensure that we get proper value for taxpayer dollars, and ensure that we increase those revenues for the benefit of the province. We also know that the decisions are ultimately made by the municipality. They're the ones that are going to decide. We're giving them the information. They now will decide if they wish to proceed to the next step, which is then to delve into the formula—delve into the hosting fees and what it is that they can generate—if they wish. That's where we're at, Mr. Speaker.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Today, 60 people from my riding are here, and they're here because they're concerned about their access to health care. The departments of obstetrics, gynecology, pediatrics and mental health have started to move out of the Welland hospital and the Niagara Falls hospital into the St. Catharines hospital. Local doctors have warned that these changes will threaten the Welland hospital's ability to offer 24/7 care. Even though all the reports talk about the importance of maintaining a full acute-service site, years after bringing these issues forward the minister remains silent.

Why is the minister ignoring legitimate concerns of patients, residents and health care providers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite, and welcome to the Legislature, people from Welland. I look forward to meeting with you after question period. I think it's important that members of communities are engaged in health care decisions; I

welcome the advocacy of groups such as are represented today.

However, it is important that we continue to improve health care services in Niagara. I know that people of Welland and people of Niagara are delighted with the new hospital in St. Catharines that is opening up access to care that was previously not available in Niagara. Things like cancer care, cardiac catheterization and longer-stay mental health services are now available in Niagara.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I look forward to the supplementary, to speak more specifically.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Residents in my community are sick of being ignored while their health care is threatened. Twenty thousand people have signed a petition in my riding to keep our services in Welland. Three years after the formal report was submitted, the minister has remained silent; there's been no response. I've already had emails and complaints from parents, as the pediatric program is moving, about access to health care in Welland for their children. They've already experienced mayhem when they've called an ambulance and the paramedic system didn't know that children were being admitted to St. Catharines as of a certain day. So parents are very concerned.

The Welland hospital is essential to the well-being of my community and our community, but we're watching as it's being dismantled. That's exactly what happened in Port Colborne and Fort Erie in past years. Is the minister planning to stand by, remain silent and allow this dismantling to continue?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell you is that every decision made in health care is made for the benefit of the people of the community. I can tell you, when it comes to maternal child care, there have been four separate external reviews of this decision. Each review was unanimous. One recent review included the CEO of Sick Kids hospital, and leaders of obstetrics and pediatrics. Speaker, this is a decision that is based on improving quality of care.

1110

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, second time, and the last. The next one's a warning.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yeah.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And whoever just did that—the member from Eglinton–Lawrence will come to order, and he will be warned as well, especially when I'm trying to get attention.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Community and Social Services, you'll have one more chance.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm waiting. Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said, there were four separate reviews. In each of the four reviews, the external reviewers found that the new model is better for quality, better for safety and better for patient experience. We have no plans to reverse that decision.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. My constituents were encouraged by your update to the House recently on the progress being made with the review of the Condominium Act. They were especially pleased to read the report released on the findings of stage one of your consultations.

Minister, I've reached out to my constituents and encouraged them to provide feedback and comments on this report. Many of the condo owners in Scarborough—Rouge River have sent my office feedback on the report, which I have provided to your ministry. Can the minister please let us know what the next steps are and what will be happening with the comments that my constituents and others have provided to the ministry on the findings of the report from stage one?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: First, I want to thank my wonderful colleague from Scarborough—Rouge River for the question, and I want to thank all members of the House who have held or continue to hold town halls and information sessions for their constituents to provide feedback on the findings report from stage one on our condo review.

While the formal public comments have now closed, the ministry will continue to accept comments throughout the review, and I'm very happy to report today that we are officially launching stage two of the condo act review.

This morning, the stage two experts panel will meet for the first time. This expert panel is reviewing the findings report and the hundreds of comments that were generated in phase one. The expert panel will develop a report of options and recommendations to update the Condominium Act. Their options and recommendations report is expected to be available for public comment by the end of the summer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I'm excited to hear the progress that the ministry continues to make as it moves forward with this review of the Condominium Act. I am especially pleased with the number of opportunities available for public participation and submission of feedback through the process. With strong engagement of the public from the beginning of the process, I feel confident that the changes proposed to the Condominium Act will be accepted and that all stakeholders will be pleased with the solutions that will come from our review. However, my constituents have raised some questions regarding the expert panel which will be putting together the options and recommendations for the changes to the act. Can the minister please share with us more information on this expert panel?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm happy to report that I will be dropping in to meet the expert panel later today to thank them for the excellent work they will be undertaking in our collaborative review and very engaging process for the review of the Condominium Act.

This group of people has been brought together because they are technical experts. They have the knowledge and experience with the issues facing the condo sector today. They're knowledgeable and experienced in one or more of the following areas: condominium governance; dispute resolution; condominium finances; consumer protection; and condominium management. They represent the interests of a wide range of professional fields—legal, condominium management, consumer advocates and residents. They will be using the values and principles that were proposed by our residents' panel in phase one to report and guide their deliberations.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, this afternoon there will be a very important vote in this House on my private member's bill entitled the Sick Days are for Sick People Act. If passed into law, my bill would end the practice of paying out public sector employees for unused sick days. Our act would allow employees in the public sector to bank their sick days for use as actual sick days. This legislation would permit ill employees to use their sick leave to take time off, not only due to their own personal illness, but for their children or their immediate family members.

Minister, would you encourage your caucus to support our legislation that protects employees, protects employers and proactively addresses the future liability on the taxpayers of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the member's question. As mentioned, the bill brought forward on sick days is something that's of concern for all of us. Certainly the Minister of Labour has introduced some legislation in order to provide some support for those families who are also dealing with situations when they're sick or when their children are sick, and we want to be able to accommodate them. We're also asking the federal government to participate in enabling some of those support systems so that everyone who needs support is receiving the support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister, that sounds reassuring, but we're facing a \$30-billion deficit, and you have the responsibility for looking after every taxpayer dollar that's being spent in the public sector. You have to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just when I get things nice and quiet, I can count on the Attorney General to ramp it back up again—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And others on this issue. Maybe I should start the clock.

Member.

Mr. John O'Toole: Speaker, this is an important issue. Even Don Drummond recognizes that many collective agreements offer generous retirement gratuities, especially to school employees, and then allow them to cash out unused sick days over the course of their career. At their retirement, they're cashing out. What's your response to that?

Now, here's some background. On average, about 20 sick days per year per employee, often ending up, at the end of their retirement, cashing out almost half a year's salary.

Minister, will you support—now, clearly—our legislation that ends the public sector practice of cashing out accumulated sick leave at retirement? Would you advise your caucus?

Hon. Charles Sousa: As noted, our government is committed to building a sustainable model for wage negotiations, and these are deals that are negotiated. These are systems that are in place. We recognize the concerns you've brought forward. That's why we're also addressing them.

What's important here is that we are negotiating, and we do have settlements and we have collective bargaining agreements that we adhere to. We recognize that the members opposite would rather do away with legislative and negotiated agreements, but that's not what we're about. We want results, and we want positive results, and that's what we're getting right now. We also want to ensure that those who need the support receive the support required, and we take your recommendations and note your positions.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs: Last week, the federal government began dismantling buildings at the world-renowned freshwater research station known as the Experimental Lakes Area. Ten days from now, the site is scheduled to close as a result of the federal Conservatives' war on science. Every time I have raised this issue in the House, the government has assured us that the province is opposed to the short-sighted and politically motivated decision.

My question is simple: What concrete steps is this government willing to take to prevent the closure of this important research facility?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank the member, first of all, for the question. It's a very important question. We're also, on this side of the House, concerned about this matter. In fact, Minister Bradley wrote to Minister Ashfield, the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and also wrote to Minister Kent, the Minister of the Environment, in this regard, in partnership with Gord Mackintosh, the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship of Manitoba. So the Manitoba minister and

our minister have indicated the importance of this Experimental Lakes area to the province of Ontario.

The value that has been gained from the research in this particular area over the years is important, but clearly, as the member knows, this is a federal government responsibility. We have a memorandum of agreement with them, but this is fully funded by the federal government. It is their operation right now, and we're waiting to hear what they're going to be doing. They've indicated that they're preparing to withdraw. We know it's \$2 million to operate—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

1120

Ms. Sarah Campbell: The fact of the matter is, writing one letter last year just doesn't cut it. People the world over are concerned about the fate of this very important research centre.

Yesterday, in the House of Commons, my federal New Democratic colleagues used an opposition day motion as an attempt to prevent this closure, but it was defeated by the Conservative majority, who are intent on muzzling scientists and ending research on the environment.

This issue cuts across party lines and has also been raised by leaders across Canada and across the world. It is not about partisan politics; it is about groundbreaking research. People are looking to this provincial government for action, not letter-writing—action.

I once again ask: What commitments will this government make to stop the closure of this facility and to keep it open?

Hon. David Orazietti: Again, Speaker, I want to thank the member. Just to be clear, we're doing the exact same thing that the NDP government in Manitoba is doing and lobbying the Conservative government federally, so it's very important to us as well.

I want to say to the member, and you know full well, that the cost of cleanup in this area is approximately \$50 million. That's a liability that we don't want Ontario taxpayers paying for. However, saying that, we are prepared to work with any organization that's prepared to come forward. This has also been articulated by the federal government. We are reviewing the matter right now, and we're prepared to work with anyone to come forward and operate the Experimental Lakes. We think they have tremendous value.

We think it's extremely unfortunate that the federal government has made this decision. We want them to reverse this decision and fund this particular Experimental Lakes operation, but we're prepared to consider the options on this going forward.

I thank the member, as well, for contacting me and writing me a letter on this, and we will be getting back to the member.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the always inspirational Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

In my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, there are a lot of young people, and these young people have a lot on their plates, Speaker. They know that getting a job in Ontario's marketplace is very competitive. They also know that employers often prefer candidates with experience. While young Ontarians are working hard to finish school, they know that when they start looking for a job they might not have the skills or the experience that is necessary to compete for the jobs that they want.

We heard during the throne speech that the new Ontario government is going to focus on youth employment and that we're going to improve opportunities for Ontario's young people. Would the minister be able to inform the House what actions our government is taking to ensure that our young people have the experience they need to succeed?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Speaker, I'm not even going to thank the member after that introduction—but I'm pleased to answer the question.

The new Ontario government has put a high priority on helping students find a summer job, indeed on youth employment in general. For the last nine years, Mr. Speaker, our government has invested heavily in building an education system that the OECD ranks as the best in the English-speaking world, because we understand how vital it is to help our young people compete in this fiercely competitive global economy.

As important as education is, we also recognize that experience goes a very long way in ensuring that young people learn crucial job skills that they'll carry with them for the rest of their careers and the rest of their lives. That's why we've developed the Ontario Summer Jobs Strategy. Last year, this program helped more than 100,000 high school and post-secondary students find work and gain crucial on-the-job experience. I'll have more to say about that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister. It's clear that the minister shares my desire and the desire of all members of this House to see our youth succeed. Bringing down the youth unemployment rate is a priority for every member of this government.

I was glad to hear the minister mention the Ontario Summer Jobs Strategy. I know this program has been very successful in the past and that going forward, it will be a valuable resource for the young people of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and all Ontarians.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Would he be able to tell us about the future of the Ontario Summer Jobs Strategy and any updates that we could expect?

Interjection: That's a good question.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That is a good question.

Just yesterday, I was at Harbourfront Centre with three of my cabinet colleagues to launch this year's Summer Jobs Strategy. Part of our Summer Jobs Strategy is a program that offers employers a \$2 incentive to hire a student who's returning to school in the fall.

Summer jobs provide students with income they can use to offset their education costs, but they also provide

students with an invaluable real-work experience that makes them even more job-ready when they graduate.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland is going to have an option.

Hon. Brad Duguid: In these challenging economic times, in this competitive job market, we need to equip our youth as early as possible with on-the-job experience that will help them now and for the rest of their lives. This summer, I'm pleased to advise, we look forward to helping another 100,000 students find jobs across Ontario. I know all members are going to want to put this in their spring householders. For more information on this program, students can go to www.ontario.ca/summerjobs.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the finance minister. As you're well aware, we are saddled with a \$12-billion deficit and a debt per capita of \$20,000 for every man—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This is the moment in which some people get themselves in trouble, because when I start to get the quiet, that's when you think you're going to stick in your last shot. It's not going to happen.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Which the member just did.

Please finish.

Mr. Rob Leone: Yes, I know, Mr. Speaker; they're screaming because of embarrassment—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's not helpful.

Mr. Rob Leone: Bill 26 being debated today, the Living Within Our Means Act, would require government to do what every responsible family across Ontario does with their lives, which is to live within their means. It says that the budget must be brought to balance by April 1, 2017, or the executive council will take a pay cut. It's a very reasonable approach, considering that Ontarians are the ones paying their salaries in the first place.

Minister, with all three parties expressing the need to bring our books into balance, can I count on your support for the Living Within Our Means Act this afternoon?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. I appreciate the concern that you're having, as well as the rest of this House, about the fiscal responsibility to balance our books by 2017-18. I also appreciate the fact that you're willing to help us in this next budget, because you should be approving this budget, because no one out there is anxious for an election at this point in time. We need to have some stability. We need to ensure that we have a good economic plan going forward.

Your private member's bill makes references, but it also talks about the rating agencies. Part of the problem is, you're limiting the opportunity for the government to achieve some of its results. We need to balance our books. We're looking forward to reducing our debt-to-

GDP, and we're going to do so with or without your support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Rob Leone: Minister, I have a quote from the Premier from the February 1 edition of the Toronto Star, and it reads: "It is obviously critical that we tackle the deficit and get to the point that we are paying down debt."

Minister, this is what the bill does. Based on your government's newfound religion on fiscal responsibility, you'd think you'd be jumping at the chance to support a bill that not only reduces the deficit but holds the government accountable, something you're saying is a priority for the government all of a sudden. Our province cannot afford another credit rating downgrade, and empty political promises will not prevent that.

Minister, will you commit today to make good on the Premier's pledge, bring some fiscal responsibility to our province and support the Living Within Our Means Act?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We're achieving positive results already. We're below our deficit targets for this year, and we're moving forward in a very positive way. We look to you to help us achieve those results, because the public is looking for that stability.

The point in your bill that creates some concern is the negative impact it would have and the additional pressure it would put on the province's credit rating because of the increased pressures that it would add. That's the only issue.

Otherwise, we're on the same page. We want to reduce our deficit, we want to ensure that the recovery of the economy continues, and we want to make certain that we take a balanced approach. I look to you not to promote slash-and-burn strategies that are going to have a negative impact on that recovery. We need to ensure that we do it positively and in a progressive manner.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Acting Premier. It has been over 30 years since the last revision of the mining health and safety act. The Ham Commission recommended that this act be reviewed and updated every two years to reflect changes in the mining industry. Since 1978, technology has evolved, but workers still face work-related injuries and deaths. Since 2007 alone, there have been 11 mining deaths in Ontario. Will the minister commit to the families of those injured workers to review and update the mining health and safety act in an open and transparent manner?

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will refer this to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. David Orazietti: Thank you, Speaker, for the question, and I thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for raising what is obviously a very serious issue and an issue of great concern for all Ontarians. We are certainly concerned about this issue.

The review process that you're referring to: We are certainly considering and prepared to work with you on this. We think it's very important. We also recognize that when any individual in this province goes to work, the expectation is that they come home to their families at the end of the day. So I want to thank the member for raising this very important issue, and we're certainly prepared to work with you to make improvements that are necessary in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the minister for indicating that he's willing to work with us in order to get this accomplished.

In the past 30 years, we have seen an unprecedented increase in international ownership of mining sites. Ontario should be a leader in mining health and safety practices, but instead we are still stuck in the 1970s. The province owes it to the families of workers like Jason Chenier and Jordan Fram, in Sudbury, who were killed while working in a mine. And there are many more like them. The families have put together MINES—M-I-N-E-S—Mining Inquiry Needs Everyone's Support. That means everyone, specifically the minister's support.

Will the minister act now to ensure the mining health and safety act is evolving at the same pace as the industry so that workers are protected in Ontario mines?

Hon. David Orazietti: Let me reiterate that on this side of the House—and I think it's certainly fair to say for all members—we're very concerned, and our condolences and our concerns go out to all the families that have been impacted by this type of tragedy anywhere in the province of Ontario. One workplace death is one too many in the province of Ontario.

I know that over the last number of years we have made investments in improving workplace safety, and we have been committed to working with our industry partners and unions across this province to help reduce those fatalities. I know that in my own community of Sault Ste. Marie the Steelworkers union has been very active on raising these issues and expressing their concern about how we need to, as a province, continue to work toward reducing workplace safety injuries. I think the member is certainly touching on an issue that everyone is concerned about. This is certainly a non-partisan issue, and we're committed to working with you to make Ontario safe—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

GREENBELT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The Greenbelt Act was proclaimed in 2005. It protects 1.8 million acres of land across the greater Golden Horseshoe. That's an area the size of Prince Edward Island. Many people in my riding of Oakville, and I think residents right throughout the province of Ontario, enjoy the recreational activities that the green-

belt offers, things from hiking to camping, fruit picking, even wine tasting. I believe the greenbelt is a testament to the vision that we can continue to grow in a sustainable way without having to surrender our countryside and open space to development and sprawl.

As we're approaching the first 10 years of the Greenbelt Act in 2015, would the minister please inform the House of the progress we've made to date and why Ontarians think it's so important to keep protecting this valuable resource?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I really want to thank the member for the question. Certainly, the greenbelt is a very large success story for our province. It's respected worldwide, and that's why it's won so many provincial and international awards for its establishment.

Protecting the green space in the Golden Horseshoe helps curb urban sprawl. It also improves our quality of life, and it preserves Ontario's natural heritage for our future generations.

This January, we expanded the greenbelt for the first time since it was created back in 2005. With the addition of the Glenorchy lands in Oakville, the total protected land in the greenbelt now is nearly two million acres across the greater Golden Horseshoe. In fact, a study released last May by the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation shows that the total economic benefit and impact of the greenbelt associated activity province-wide exceeds \$9.1 billion annually. These additions to the greenbelt will allow us to continue to deliver the economic benefits to the region, and we look forward to continuing to protect Ontario's precious green space.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have very special guests in the Speaker's gallery, and I would be taking my life in my hands if I did not introduce them because one is my Aunt Ann, three other cousins, and my wife, Rosemarie. Welcome. I'm taking them to lunch. Pray for me.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Rob Leone: I have a few people from Cambridge who are starting to make their way down to the members' gallery: Roy Broadbear, Jeff Mole, Kevin Street, Wes Mazur, Joe Farwell, Roy Hawkins, Ron Dancy and Bob Miller. My constituency assistants, Nicholas Woodfield and James Roy, will be joining us this afternoon, as well as the former member for Mississauga North, Terry Jones, who is making his way to the chamber. I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to welcome Councillor Jane Twinney from the town of Newmarket, who will be

joining us today. She is here to express her support for a private member's bill that I will be introducing just a bit later today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome her here.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in this House today to voice my concerns about the new trades tax, on behalf of tradespeople across Parry Sound–Muskoka. On March 8, I joined with frustrated local tradespeople to sign the pledge to stop the trades tax. I was struck by just how great the frustration has become. One worker even took the time out of his workday to make the three-hour trip from Sudbury to attend the event and voice his concerns.

While there are many serious issues with the new tax, the fact that local tradespeople have been caught off guard by the new fees, which are soon to become mandatory, is most concerning. I was fortunate enough to hear from hairdressers, electricians, plumbers, mechanics and carpenters from across the riding, all opposed to the new tax, and to present petitions on their behalf in the Legislature. It is clear that the College of Trades does little to address our current skills shortage and will make it more difficult and more expensive to do business in the province of Ontario.

I stand with my colleagues in the Ontario PC caucus, committed to opposing this new tax that will undoubtedly have a negative impact on tradespeople and the economy across the province. I would also like to encourage people to visit stopthetradestax.ca to learn more and to sign the petition.

RING OF FIRE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again I call on the government to do the right thing when it comes to what is the potential of the Ring of Fire. We have in Ontario one of the richest natural resources across the world, when it comes to chromite. We're talking about ore that's 50% to 60% pure when it comes to the chromite deposits there.

Not only do you have chromite; you have nickel, gold and other materials, and there's a huge opportunity here for Ontario to position itself as a manufacturer of stainless steel. Ontario and Canada are the only G8 countries that are not into the manufacturing of stainless steel in a major way, yet we control most of the natural resources. Why would Ontario, which controls the natural resources that are the component parts to make stainless steel, not take advantage of this—our competitive advantage? The ore is here in the ground. We can bring the ore to a site somewhere in Ontario—bring the iron ore in, bring the chromite in, bring the nickel matte in—and be able to process that into stainless steel.

Yes, it's going to take some doing. The private sector is interested in making those investments, but we need to have a provincial government that is prepared to do what it needs to do in order to facilitate those discussions so we can have it. Imagine if we get the stainless steel. That means literally thousands, if not in the tens of thousands, of jobs across the Ontario economy, everything from mining the ore in the Ring of Fire to the shipping on rail south somewhere, the processing of stainless steel. The finance jobs, the activity on the TSX is just incalculable. I call on this government to work with us, in order to position the Ring of Fire as a potential for making stainless steel in Ontario.

HEALTHY KIDS PANEL REPORT

Mr. Phil McNeely: Last week I met with two nurses, Una Ferguson and Cécile Diby from Orléans, representing the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, or RNAO. We discussed a number of things related to health in Ontario: the effects of poverty, the need for more and better social housing, and the modernization of health care. One thing I was encouraged by after this meeting was the greater role nurses are taking in health policy and research. Like our government, the RNAO's policy team is focused on creating a vibrant and healthy Ontario.

We also discussed the recently released Healthy Kids Panel report, co-chaired by Ottawa's own Alex Munter, CEO of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. The report correctly concludes that if Ontario's health care system is to be sustainable in the future, healthier lifestyles need to be a big part of the solution. The nurses agreed that when \$4.5 billion is spent treating preventable health conditions caused by obesity, like type 2 diabetes and heart disease, we as legislators and professionals must not stand idly by. The report shows that 75% of obese children go on to become obese adults. The best way of preventing these future health problems is to take aggressive action today.

The panel had three recommendations: starting all kids on the path to health from before birth and onward, creating healthy communities where kids can play and be active, and changing the food environment to help make it easier for kids and parents to choose healthy foods.

Their interest in this report was encouraging. Government can't solve these problems alone. We need an all-hands-on-deck approach that involves all parties, the private sector, non-profits and, most importantly, Ontario families.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: For two years now, citizens of Northumberland–Quinte West have voiced their concerns and pleaded with this government to not place wind turbines in their community. Since being elected, I have supported my constituents as they have attended

numerous meaningless public information sessions on proposed wind turbine farms.

I want to give credit to the Alliance for the Protection of the Northumberland Hills for their relentless efforts to mobilize constituents, create awareness and try to stop these problem-plagued windmills. I further want to acknowledge the township of Alnwick/Haldimand's recently adopted motions stating they do not support the approval of industrial wind farms within their community. Citizens have attended public meetings hoping their voices actually mattered, when in reality these meetings were, and will continue to be, just lip service.

Both I and my constituents were encouraged when the new Premier said that projects such as wind turbines would only go to willing host communities. Well, based on extensive local consultation, it is increasingly clear that communities within Northumberland–Quinte West are not willing hosts. A moratorium on wind turbines is long overdue. I insist that the Premier and the Minister of Rural Affairs stop saying they are going to listen to rural communities and actually listen to rural communities. Stand up for rural citizens and municipalities and issue the wind turbine moratorium immediately.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Jonah Schein: On behalf of the constituents in Davenport, I'd like to congratulate the new Premier of Ontario. We all watched closely and many of us rooted for you to make history back in January at the old Maple Leaf Gardens. But most importantly, we were rooting for everyone in this province, because communities across Ontario are hurting and it's now time to move from conversations to concrete actions that will address the issues facing people in Ontario.

We are looking for signs that this new Premier understands the mistakes of the Liberal government. My constituents want you to acknowledge that your massive tax breaks for corporations have put the province out of balance, and you've left us with a revenue problem. We want you to admit that privatization of Ontario's energy sector and subsidization of the nuclear industry is the wrong choice for this province. We want you to recognize that your government has pushed unwanted casinos and dirty diesel trains on our communities, and acknowledge that your government's Bill 115 hurt workers and families. Show that you understand there are 600,000 people out of work and yet in 10 years your government has not made one single positive change to protect unemployed Ontarians.

It's time to change direction. I encourage you to work with our NDP caucus to close corporate tax loopholes, to make life more affordable, to support our jobs plan for youth, to move forward with a real plan to reduce poverty, reform social assistance and protect vulnerable workers, and to pursue a balanced economic approach that provides the revenue we need to make investments in our public institutions and in clean, green public transit. Please recognize the mistakes your government has made

and work with all MPPs to pursue a new path of fairness for the people of Ontario.

1310

KIDNEY HEALTH MONTH

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the month of March as Kidney Health Month in Canada. March 14 was marked as World Kidney Day.

An estimated 1.5 million Ontarians have or are at increased risk for developing chronic kidney disease. Recent studies show that chronic kidney disease patients who receive early guidance and dialysis treatment have a significantly lower risk of death.

During this Kidney Health Month, I wish to acknowledge the leadership role, in promoting prevention and awareness, of the Ontario Renal Network, the Kidney Foundation of Canada and other renal partners who are providing care, and a global leader based in my riding, Baxter Canada.

I'm proud to be a part of the government that is working to promote prevention and improving access to and the quality of renal care across the province. I would like to encourage all members of this House to raise awareness about the importance of kidney health in their communities.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to start by telling people in this House that Durham region is the home to the once-famous Windfields Farm racetrack and breeding farm, home to Northern Dancer, one of the most prized horses ever in Canada—in North America—and also a very well developed equine industry throughout all phases of standardbred horses, training, saddlery, you name it, as well as quarter horses at Picov Downs.

But what's most disheartening is that March 30 will be the last race day at Kawartha Downs near Peterborough. Many of the participants there from my riding of Durham and elsewhere are going to be disappointed. This means the loss of 800 local jobs and the end of a 40-year tradition. It is a direct result of an intervention by Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne's government in ignoring rural Ontario with the abrupt cancellation—without notice or debate—of the Slots at Racetracks Program, this government's cancellation of a partnership that worked. It created 60,000 jobs in rural Ontario and provided \$2 billion a year in revenue to the province of Ontario to help health care, to help education.

Durham riding is proud to be the home of racing industry leaders such as Glenn Van Camp, owner and breeder of San Pail, the top standardbred horse in the world. It's also home to Tara Hills, the top breeding farm in Canada, now cancelled.

It's a shame what they've done to the industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just a reminder to all members—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order, and when I'm standing, nothing happens.

A reminder to all members that we refer to each other either by their riding or by their title. It removes the downward spiral of being negative to each other.

I will now entertain the next statement.

PASSOVER

Mr. Mike Colle: On Monday night, many of my constituents in the beautiful riding of Eglinton—Lawrence, in the heart of the city of Toronto, and many members of the Jewish faith all over the world will be celebrating the holiday of Passover.

Passover is the time to remember and commemorate the liberation of the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt. The ancient story of the exodus from Egypt, which explains how the Israelites achieved their freedom from slavery, is one that Ontarians of all faiths can still appreciate today.

On Passover, families gather for their Seder dinner, where they retell the exodus from Egypt to their children and grandchildren and pass down the spirit of liberation and hope for a better future.

The foods eaten during the Seder symbolize slavery and freedom, such as matzo, an unleavened flatbread which symbolizes the bread that the Israelites made very quickly while fleeing Egypt, because they didn't have time for it to rise. There are many other wonderful foods that are served, like horseradish, maror and haroset, apples and nuts.

Anyway, it's a time to remember and reflect. I want to wish the entire Jewish community across Ontario a very healthy, happy and meaningful Passover with lots of gefilte fish, chicken soup and many, many matzo balls.

I say to all my Jewish friends and constituents, Chag Sameach.

NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to rise today and announce that March is also National Nutrition Month. The theme is: Eat Right, Your Way, Every Day. It's to take into account that your lifestyle has choices in the way you eat. Your ethnicity is the way you eat, and how you prove yourself to your children is the way you eat. You want to ensure that no matter where you come from, you're making healthy choices every day, because if we do not start by improving our eating choices when we're young, middle-aged or old, our health care system will continue to be burdened by disease and illness which should be and can be avoided with proper nutrition.

On behalf of the dietitians of this province, the moms who pack our lunches, the dads who buy us pizza on a Friday night, I want to say, thank you very much. Keep nutrition in mind. It is very important that, from this day forward, starting in March, we plan our nutrition appropriately.

I know as MPPs in this House, our eating habits are horrible, and I think we should all get together and somehow provide that our receptions at night are healthy choices.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think that begs a response. I'm sure that dads do serve healthy pizza on Fridays, and I thank the member for his statement.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the House today, as is the custom of the Speaker to announce visitors who were once here on a professional level, we have with us, in the members' gallery, from Mississauga North the former MPP Terry Jones in the 30th, 31st and 32nd Parliaments. Thank you for being with us. Welcome.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PRESERVING EXISTING COMMUNITIES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À PRÉSERVER LES COLLECTIVITÉS EXISTANTES

Mr. Klees moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to amend the Places to Grow Act, 2005 with respect to the finality of certain municipal planning decisions / Projet de loi 35, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur les zones de croissance en ce qui concerne le caractère définitif de certaines décisions prises au niveau municipal en matière d'aménagement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Frank Klees: From time to time, legislation that's passed in this House has unintended consequences, and when that comes to light, I believe it's our responsibility to amend that legislation to ensure that it serves the public interest.

The Places to Grow Act, 2005, and its companion legislation, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, is an example of that, and, specifically, with regard to the direction of intensification of new growth to existing built-up areas. Often, even though local municipalities would deny that application that would impact the character, the quality of life and the property values of existing neighbourhoods—are overturned. Because of the way the existing provincial legislation is written, that decision by the local council is often overturned by the Ontario Municipal Board.

The legislation before us would amend the Places to Grow Act to ensure that local municipalities are empowered to make those decisions concerning their local

neighbourhoods and that that decision, once made by the municipality, may not be referred to the OMB.

1320

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm very pleased that you memorized the explanatory note. That was a really good job. I appreciate that.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, it's from the heart.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): From the heart and the explanatory note—I'm going to help you there.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries. Yes, the Minister of—I've got to get this one right. I know it's there.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'm not going to tell you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Citizenship.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, it's with mixed feelings that I rise to remind my colleagues that today is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. I say "with mixed feelings" because I know that we all agree that in a perfect world, we shouldn't need such a day. However, this is not a perfect world.

On the other hand, the fact is that we have this day because we care about it and honour it all around the globe, and it's a sign that we are making progress.

In fact, as an African-Canadian, a son of immigrants here in Ontario, a proud member of this provincial assembly and a cabinet minister—the fact that I'm standing here today says a lot. It says that we are making progress.

As many of my colleagues will know, the United Nations chose March 21 as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination because it marks the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa. On that day 53 years ago, police opened fire on a peaceful crowd demonstrating against apartheid law, and 69 people died that day.

The effects of racism, based on one's colour, continue to be felt around the world. One of the leading philosophers of the 20th century, Abraham Heschel, once observed that "Racism is man's gravest threat to man—the maximum of hatred for a minimum of reason." We must eliminate that threat once and for all.

The theme for this year's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is Racism and Sport. Racism is sprinkled throughout the history of sports, but today the sports world is playing a bigger role than ever in ending racism. Athletes are role models who have tremendous influence with young people. Imagine the progress that we could make if every star athlete publicly pledged to make sport racism-free.

We're not there yet. Last year, an African-Canadian hockey player named Joel Ward was subject to racist tweets after scoring an overtime goal for his team. If this is what today's racialized athletes have to face, one can only imagine what Herb Carnegie must have gone through in the 1940s as one of the best talents who never had a chance to play in the NHL.

We're not there yet, but we are making progress. It's worth noting that one of the top scorers of the Toronto Maple Leafs, Nazem Kadri, is one of the first Muslims to play in the NHL, and I'm very proud of his record.

On this day I call everyone in this House to consider how far we've come on fighting racism and how far we have left to go. We are men and women of influence in this chamber. We represent a province that is a model of civility and diversity, but even in Ontario, racism still exists. Let us all work together every day until it is no longer true. Let us publicly pledge to do our best to make this House and this province racism-free.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Absolutely. Thank you.

I apologize to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for fumbling his title, and I thank you for your statement.

It is now time for responses.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for his heartfelt thoughts.

I'm honoured to rise today on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party and to speak to the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The theme of this year's event is Racism and Sport. The hope is to address both the problem of racism and racial discrimination in sports, and the positive role that sports can play in tackling those very issues. Sport, at its best, is often about putting individual competition second to teamwork, and team sports, by their nature, foster the values of respect, co-operation and fair play. Whether it's an international event like the Olympics or the Pan Am Games or local extracurricular activities, well-designed sports programs can help integrate marginalized groups, and they can do so in a way that dispels petty conflicts and inherited resentments. So this is an appropriate theme.

I would also say that this sunny weather we are enjoying today, which has changed—touch wood—is somehow appropriate to this occasion. On a sunny day, 53 years ago, March 21, 1960, on the other side of the world, it was unusually hot. On that day, people gathered peacefully in the streets of Sharpeville, South Africa, to make their voices heard. There were students and workers, expectant mothers and children. They were citizens. They were gathered in the streets of Sharpeville because, although they were citizens, they were not equal because they were black South Africans. In apartheid South Africa, they were forced to carry passbooks. This was a sort of in-country passport used to restrict the movement of black South Africans over age 16 in areas that were designated white-only.

The protesters were rightfully upset, but because they were lifted up by the energy of community and shared purpose, the day had an almost joyous air. People sang hymns and freedom songs. They had gathered in the morning outside the Sharpeville police compound. As the day wore on and the sun bore down, their numbers dwindled, but many remained because they were so committed to the principle of equality.

They were also deeply committed to peaceful protest. But around 3 p.m., all of that came to an end. Without warning, the police opened fire on the crowd with machine guns. In all, 69 were killed; hundreds more were injured. Most suffered bullet wounds in their backs. There were people running for their lives.

Shortly after the gunfire stopped, it began to rain, building to a thunderstorm. The downpour would wash away the blood, but not the stain. The Sharpeville massacre marked the beginning of apartheid's most brutal chapter. It shocked the world and led the United Nations to create the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In doing so, the UN called on the international community to intensify efforts to eliminate racial discrimination in all forms.

Apartheid was discarded in 1994. Racism is not dismantled so easily. Racism doesn't need razor wire, machine guns, armoured cars or passbooks to exist. It can reside in political and business institutions. It can reside in organizational structures and legislation. It can reside in individual and collective mindsets.

So the task of conquering racism and racial inequality requires that we address both the public policies and private attitudes that perpetuate it. By "we," I mean all of us. All people need to engage with this issue in a meaningful way, to have difficult, frank discussions about this subject and to work toward real solutions.

In 1960, the world had very different attitudes than it does today. Racist laws and practices have since been abolished in many countries. The United Nations has constructed an international framework for combatting racism. But for all that progress, too many communities are divided and too many societies suffer under the dead weight of racial discrimination.

Racial discrimination robs afflicted societies of intellectual and creative life. It dampens the spirit of innovation, and it betrays the basic promise of freedom and dignity that all people should enjoy.

I hope that all of us here and those looking on will rededicate ourselves to this cause and recognize that if we are going to live in a better world, then we all have to take ownership for that task.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I am very honoured to rise today to share my thoughts on today's special day. Today marks the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and it is a time for us to reflect on the horrible massacre that my colleagues have mentioned that occurred March 21, 1960, in South Africa. But it's also important to recognize that racial discrimination continues to exist today and it exists here in Canada.

One of the key things to recognize when it comes to the elimination of racial discrimination is that there are

three areas in which racial discrimination continues to exist and continues to plague our society. We must look at it in three areas: the justice system, education and employment.

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With respect to the justice system, there's a very powerful book written by Professor David Tanovich entitled *The Colour of Justice*, and Professor Tanovich boldly states in this book that "The colour of justice in Canada is white." Justice Iacobucci, once a justice for the Supreme Court of Canada, indicates that systemic racism toward natives in the justice system exists—and it's very clear that systemic racism exists across the board for racialized communities. In fact, it's well known that African-Canadians and many other racialized communities are far overrepresented in prisons and they have a disproportionate number of contacts with police. This speaks to a systemic racism that exists in our police forces. It's not an example of a bad apple. Though our police forces try their best to do a good job, there is a reality that a culture of racism exists and needs to be addressed.

When it comes to the elimination of racial discrimination, we must address the realities, and the realities are that all people, regardless of their skin, must be treated in a fair and equitable manner. When it comes to addressing the root causes of racial discrimination, we must address the reality that there is unequal access to opportunity for folks who are racialized.

If we look at education and employment, disparate levels of access to education and to resources result in poverty, and poverty is one of the root causes of discrimination. Racial discrimination, at its root, is a question of power. When there is a power imbalance, there will be discrimination. If we want to eliminate discrimination and racism, we need to eliminate the power imbalance which perpetuates this racism. When it comes to education and employment, addressing or redressing this problem by creating equal opportunities for access to education, equal opportunities for access to resources will be a step in the right direction to addressing the issue of racial discrimination.

When it comes to employment, just today the Toronto Star released some facts and figures regarding employment indicating that racialized Canadians make far less than white Canadians. It's a reality and we must address this. In fact, racialized Canadians make approximately \$30,000, compared to \$37,000, almost \$40,000 for other Canadians.

The situation is much worse if you're a first-generation male. When compounded by gender, immigrant women are in some of the worst conditions, and it's directly related to the reality of poverty. If you are racialized and you're a woman, you're more likely to be impoverished and you're more vulnerable to discrimination.

Again, to address this, we must look at the root causes. Racial discrimination is not only a prejudicial viewpoint but also is a systemic power imbalance. To address that,

we have to have policies that look at ways to combat this power imbalance, and one of the ways I've indicated is creating accessible opportunities for education.

It also requires us to look at the spheres of influence. Racialized communities are far under-represented in the spheres of power. Whether it is the public sector or the private sector, if you look at CEOs, if you look at partners in law firms, they are far under-represented when it comes to racialized communities.

If you look at the politics of representation, our young children growing up need to see other people who are successful for them to envision themselves in positions of power or to envision themselves as being successful. So our teachers, our principals also need to reflect the communities they represent. That's another area where we need to work on creating the representational aspect of having community members represented in their schools and in professions so that young people can see themselves achieving the success.

Again, if we are truly committed to addressing this problem, we need to address the root causes. The root causes are not only a viewpoint or a culture or a mentality, but also a systemic problem of power, inequality and an imbalance. Only when we address this imbalance of power can we really eliminate racism.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before we move to petitions from Durham—I mean, petitions—I do want to bring this to your attention, even though I'm sure that this will be heard. There's a gentleman who is receiving a very milestone moment, who is celebrating a birthday this weekend, who is going to be solidifying being the oldest elected member in this chamber. The member from York Centre, Mr. Monte Kwinter, will be having a birthday, so I thought I'd just announce that so it's on the record.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know we gave that a lot of time the other day because he has had so many milestones, because every minute he lives, he sets another record.

Anyway, it's now time for—oh, wait. I have a point of order from the member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent of this House to bring in a birthday cake for whenever Monte Kwinter's birthday is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Unanimous consent has been asked for a birthday cake to be delivered for when Mr. Kwinter would be best appropriately receiving this. Do I hear a no? I think I've heard a no, so I'm going to have to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think I heard a no.

It's now time—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've lost control. Jocularly, jocularly.

The member from Durham for petitions.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Mr. John O'Toole: It is an honour to present petitions on behalf of my constituency today. All members appreciate that.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the United Senior Citizens of Ontario has expressed its concerns over the high costs of parking at hospitals in Ontario," and on behalf of its 300,000 members is asking for relief; and

"Whereas thousands of Ontario seniors find it difficult to live on their fixed income and" simply "cannot afford these extra hospital parking fees added to their daily living costs; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association Journal" itself "has said in an editorial that parking fees are a barrier to health care and add additional stress to patients" who already have enough to deal with;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's members of provincial Parliament and the Kathleen Wynne government take action to abolish parking fees for all seniors when visiting hospitals."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've let it finish, but I do remind the member again, because he was the offending member before, that we're not going to use personal names, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. That's a better improvement.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if you will indulge me just for a second before I read the petition. I have here the names of 15,000 people who have signed the petition, and I have the three people here in the gallery who have helped to collect all of these: Mr. Dean Wills, Ms. Barbara Nielsen, and her husband, Lars Nielsen.

For those of you who have been around the House a long time, you may remember Mr. Wills. He was one of the interpreters for MPP Gary Malkowski, and was actually one of the strangers in the House who was allowed on the floor. He is here as well today.

The petitions are many and varied. We have consulted with the Clerk and we have a statement to make instead of reading them all.

We have received over 15,000 signatures from Ontarians who are concerned about the condition of animals who are bred in puppy mills across the province.

The Legislative Assembly is asked to do what it can to shut down these puppy mills in order to protect the health and well-being of innocent animals, including but not limited to the regulating of sales, animal rights in breeding facilities, and by fostering public awareness.

I have about 14,000 of these signatures, and I would require a couple of pages to deliver them to the Clerks. Thank you very much.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by over 2,000 of my residents in Oxford county.

"Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and the quality of life for all future generations;

"Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which will have significant human and financial costs for;

"Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

"Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in the headwaters of multiple highly vulnerable aquifers is detrimental;

"Whereas the county of Oxford has passed a resolution requesting a moratorium on landfill construction or approval;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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"To implement a moratorium in Oxford county on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

"That this review of alternatives would give special emphasis on (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can efficiently and practically be recycled or reused so as not to require" landfill disposal.

I thank you very much for the opportunity to present the petition and I affix my signature.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm pleased to add my voice to the member from Beaches-East York and again deliver even more signatures of the over 15,000 signatures from Ontarians who are concerned about the condition of animals who are bred in puppy mills across the province. The Legislative Assembly is asked to do what it can to shut down these puppy mills in order to protect the health

and well-being of innocent animals. That could include regulating sales, animal rights and breeding facilities, and fostering public awareness.

I'm pleased to add my signature and to give it to the wonderful page Nadim to be delivered to the table.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. Rob Leone: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the current debt in Ontario is over \$250 billion, and is currently close to 40% of GDP; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has made a clear commitment to the Legislature that the budget will be balanced; and

"Whereas it is imperative that government lead by example when it comes to fiscal responsibility and incur real consequences for a failure to meet their goals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support Bill 26, Living Within Our Means Act, 2013, and hold the government to account for its promises to balance the budget, with a failure to do so resulting in salary reduction for cabinet ministers. Furthermore, establish a new structure that caps our debt at 50% of total GDP."

I'm pleased to sign this petition and hand it over to page Kyara.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until an independent third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects, we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines; and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government place a moratorium on the approval of any wind energy projects and a moratorium on the construction of industrial wind projects until further studies on the potential adverse health effects of industrial wind turbines, their effect on the environment, the potential devaluation of residential property are completed; and that any industrial wind projects not currently connected to the grid be cancelled."

I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker, and I'll affix my name to it.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario puppy and kitten mills deprive animals of proper care by confining them to inhumanely small cages without access to play, feeding them contaminated food and water, forcing puppies and kittens to breed, inflicting a wide array of cruelty, including amputation, execution and withholding of veterinary care;

"Whereas there are an estimated 100 such mills in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Ban the sale of puppy mill puppies and kittens in pet stores' retail outlets and via their websites."

I affix my signature.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario has closed historic jails in Walkerton and other rural Ontario municipalities resulting in loss of employment and heritage buildings to be vacated; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario is committed to job creation and economic development in rural Ontario communities and the preservation of heritage resources; and

"Whereas the provincial Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services has indicated a desire to establish a provincial correctional museum and memorial to showcase the history, heritage and legacy of our correctional institutions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support the establishment of the Province of Ontario Correctional Museum in the historic 1866 Bruce County jail in Walkerton and instruct the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, to begin discussions with the municipality of Brockton."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature, and I'll give it to page Dasha.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario is the only province in Canada that does not allow the provincial Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities; and

"Whereas the people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to address their issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To grant the Ombudsman of Ontario the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities."

I support this, will affix my signature and will give this to page Arveen to deliver to the table.

JUNK FOODS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I have over 500 signatures on this particular petition.

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association is lobbying for the introduction of graphic warnings, restrictive marketing, and higher taxes on junk foods;

"Whereas the introduction of such measures would constitute an undue burden on the working poor and middle class;

"Whereas such measures would severely limit the ability of small and independent business to compete against larger, more well-funded corporations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Prevent the implementation of graphic warning labels, restricted marketing, and high tax on junk foods."

I present this petition to page Eric.

STITTSVILLE PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I have a petition from constituents in my riding. There are 1,446 signatures on this petition, and I will read it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas currently, there is not an Ottawa-Carleton District School Board public high school in the town of Stittsville; and

"Whereas the population of Stittsville is expected to grow to over 70,000 residents by 2025; and

"Whereas an Ottawa-Carleton District School Board public high school is required in Stittsville to meet the need of students now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately provide the funding required to build an Ottawa-Carleton District School Board public high school in Stittsville."

I give this petition to page Ali.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, we have received over 15,000 signatures from Ontarians who are concerned about the condition of animals that are bred in puppy mills across the province. The Legislative Assembly is asked to do what it can to shut down these puppy mills, in order to protect the health and well-being of innocent animals.

I affix my signature to the petition.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

SICK DAYS ARE FOR SICK PEOPLE ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 RÉSERVANT LES JOURNÉES DE CONGÉ DE MALADIE AUX PERSONNES MALADES

Mr. O'Toole moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 25, An Act governing sick days in the broader public sector / Projet de loi 25, Loi régissant les journées de congé de maladie dans le secteur parapublic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, you mean I only have 12 minutes? This is a convincing argument that I have to make here, and that's a limited amount of time.

It's an important time in Ontario, if you look at the context of my bill. Recently, we had a report on the economy of Ontario by a very well-respected economist, Mr. Don Drummond. Mr. Drummond was Paul Martin's Deputy Minister of Finance in Ottawa—one of the best finance ministers Canada has had. He then went on to become the chief economist for TD Bank. Premier McGuinty had asked him for some advice on how to bring things under control in Ontario. He came up with a very comprehensive report on providing public sector services, with some 300 recommendations, none of which have been respected by Premier McGuinty and now Premier Wynne.

1350

The point of Bill 25 is quite specific and very focused, and an immediate savings of revenue and risk to the province of Ontario. For the viewers at home, I'm going to make this a very reasoned and focused discussion, not about the jobs and the economy of Ontario, which are in an absolutely frightening state.

Our third-largest expenditure in the \$120-billion budget—Mr. Speaker, you probably know this—is the interest payments on the debt. That should put on a frame that says we have a problem, Houston. Let's get on with it. My bill addresses a very specific action that can be taken—and I raised a question with the Minister of Finance today, and he virtually agreed with me. I think you can check Hansard. He sort of said he would encourage the members of their caucus to support Bill 25, a very small, meaningful, sensitive bill.

I'm going to read the instructions on the bill itself. I've had a hand in developing this bill—not all the hands; there have been some other people who worked harder on it than I did. But the bill is the Sick Days are for Sick People Act, 2013. Here's what it says in the explanatory note, in the limited time here:

"Under the act, public sector employers are not permitted to compensate employees for unused sick days"—

pretty straightforward. "An exception is provided for individuals who are employed by a public sector employer on the day the act comes into force, as long as they continue to be employed by that employer.

"Public sector employers are not permitted to allow employees to use any unused sick days except when the employee is sick or is caring for a sick family member," like a child or a loved one. Very clear.

In most cases in the public sector, they get a day or two per month—it could be 20 days a year—that they're entitled to as sick leave. Traditionally, they have been able to accumulate that. That continues. The issue is being compensated on retirement for any unused sick days; that's the real issue.

The final portion here is important.

There's a retroactivity provision in the bill, and that allows people who are in employ today to retain the entitlement of their sick days.

"If an employee of a public sector employer uses a sick day but does not, if required, provide sufficient evidence of sickness in accordance with the regulations, the employee must repay any compensation received from the employer" in respect to that day that's being questioned. "Regulations may be made governing the furnishing of evidence of sickness, including when it is required and what constitutes sufficient evidence in different circumstances" that would be described.

Like all bills it's not very large, but it does have a very specific focus, and I think that's what I'm trying to achieve here today.

I have looked around in other jurisdictions on how they're handling this, and it's always good to recognize that no one operates in isolation. I think a good comparator—I worked in personnel for a very large company for about 10 to 15 years, I guess, for General Motors Canada. In that time, we did look at repetitive absences. In fairness, it was governed by the CAW; it was mostly contract. On the salary side, they were non-unionized. And on appraisals—appraisals were annual—those were always taken into consideration: being late, actually being at work and all those kinds of things. Attendance is very important, especially in an environment where other people are depending on you being there. Mr. Speaker, if you weren't here today, we would have to substitute for that. This is what I'm saying: It's a practical thing.

Now, let's be very clear. If someone is ill, I believe they should be entitled to whatever their collective agreement said. So in that respect, nothing is really being removed from someone; it's trying to get rid of this predictable misuse of the entitlement itself.

I'm asking members to look at it as not a bill that is going to change the world, but it certainly will do two things. It will protect employees, employers and, most importantly, the taxpayers of Ontario. They're the silent voices in all of this.

There are entitlements that people earn through collective bargaining, and I respect that process. They have to be realistic. We look at certain settlements that are made out of the context of the ability to pay; this is where

we start to run into a problem. If you want any more evidence, all you have to do is look at what's going on in Greece, in Cyprus. It's a reality, Mr. Speaker, in fairness.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, has put several—in fact, I think there are 12 papers—more recently the one on agriculture. These papers that are put on the table for the Premier and cabinet to look at are making very fundamental recommendations; and I believe Ms. Horwath put some papers on the table as well.

I would hope that we're all aiming at trying to eliminate waste in government—waste of taxpayers' money. But when I go to the committees today, I hear about Ornge and the scandalous waste of money. I hear it in the gas plant fiasco that's going on. It's in that context that this is a small bill. I think it will signal whether or not the government is serious about addressing this abuse of absenteeism.

As I've said, I've looked at other provinces and there's a variety of solutions. I've also looked at legal decisions with respect to the potential risks here. There's quite a good paper by Bill Bransford, "How to Fight Sick Leave Abuse."

Now, there's a general appreciation in personnel generally and labour relations that three days is generally recognized as, I would say, more or less the maximum that you could be questioned—after that, there's an expectation today, whether it's in writing or just the practical way people work, that you would have a doctor's note. I've always believed that if you're sick, you should be—"Where were you?" "In the hospital." Do you understand? I worked 31 years at General Motors, and I think I had a total of 10 days off in 31 years. It's not 20 days a year automatically, but if someone has cancer, I think they should be covered. Do you understand? This "I'm not feeling well on Friday afternoon"—I don't go for it; or Monday morning. I don't go for that at all—not at all. I think there's way too much casualness about that, and that's the structure that I'm trying to put in place here. If you're ill, this bill says it in four or five words, "Sick leave is for people who are actually ill."

There are other leaves that are entitlements, whether it's family leave or—there's a bill before the Legislature that deals with things like that. So that's the bill—this lawyer's letter that I'm reading here says a couple of things.

"When an employee is out on an unscheduled absence claiming an entitlement to sick leave because of incapacitation, the manager must usually grant the sick leave if the employee self-certifies for an absence of three days or less." That's the person who says, "I was sick." Now, if that's happening every week—wait a minute here; maybe you have a bigger problem. There could be substance abuse problems. There could be other reasons explaining—and that employee should self-certify with a cause. That's kind of what I'm saying.

But keep in mind that the employer in Ontario, whether it's at the municipality level, a college, a university, a hospital or here at Queen's Park, is the taxpayer of Ontario. All the money we get comes from someone else's pocket.

I've looked at this, Mr. Speaker, from the point of view of some of the entitlements today. This is a very small one. It does recognize the accumulated sick leave of people today. It's not targeted to any one group or other. These are managers—anyone in the public sector is my point. I ask, respectfully, for the members to listen. I see a previous Minister of Labour here. I would expect him to support it. In fact, I would hope he speaks to it. So I'm asking, with the greatest degree of humility that I'm used to, to look at it.

There's lots of literature on this. This is a paper that I have here; it's from Alberta. It says, "New to the workplace? Learn about Alberta's workplace rules." I think these are reasonable rules. I went through this document. It's about 30 pages. It's on young employees. I think perhaps in our schools today—children are expected to be in attendance. It's a good learning area for people, and if they're ill, they should be covered and perhaps we should help them to catch up when they come back three or four days later.

1400

In that context, Mr. Speaker, I'm asking the members of all parties to look at this in a non-partisan way and keep one thing in mind: Who is the person paying the bill?

I see the pages here, all young, grade 8—they're going to be here for the end of this week and next week. It's too bad you don't get longer than two weeks, because it's a great place where members try to solve problems, large and small. This is one of those small problems that we're putting on the table. It's an unusual little name for the bill, but nonetheless, if you look—An Act governing sick days in the broader public sector—it's pretty straightforward, and what it's trying to do is respect the people who have accumulated entitlements, and set the rules for new people.

I would say, quite frankly, that the other challenging issue in the public sector today is pensions. All pensions are in deficit—every single one. That should be addressed by—not retroactively, not at all. Going forward, you'll move from a defined benefit today to a defined contribution plan, the same as provincial members have.

So, with those remarks, I ask for your indulgence and for your support. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: With the greatest respect, there's no way I'm going to vote for this bill—my God, no way.

I'm just amazed as I listen to the Conservatives in this House espouse what it is that they want to do coming up to whenever the next election is. It's all about whacking the little guy. They're really good at saying, "Let's find a way to whack the little guy and let the guy on the top get more." Because when the guy on the top gets more, the little guy is going to get trickled on. Well, I come from a place that when you get trickled on, it doesn't feel warm and fuzzy; it feels wet and cold.

I say to my friends in the Conservative caucus: My God, would you one day stand in this House and say,

"We understand that the working people in this province and those people who go to work every day have a tough time, and sometimes, yes, they decide that they're going to join a union"? They join what's called a—say it with me, the word "union." They join unions, and then they go off and they bargain collective agreements.

Sometimes, the employer is in a position where the employer doesn't have a lot of money to put into the collective agreement. You know; you worked for GM. Often, the employer goes to the table and says, "Listen, I hear you. I'd love to give you more money, but I'm not making any, so can we do some non-monetary things as a way of getting through this collective agreement, to try to get something so that you feel as if you got something out of the bargaining?" At times, employers have said, "Okay, I'll give you an extra floater." For those people who don't know the term, it's an extra unpaid day off a year. Sometimes the employer says, "Well, you have to wait five or six years to get three weeks of holidays. Maybe we'll give you a little bit more holidays." And, yes, sometimes they say, "Maybe we'll give you some more sick days"—because not everybody out there uses their sick days.

For the Conservatives to come in here all of a sudden and put the boots to the workers and say, "If you happen to negotiate something, we're going to make sure that the laws of this land don't allow you to bargain in good faith with your employers"—it's not the right thing to do. It is draconian. It is the Conservative way of doing things: "Whack the little guy; help the big guy. The big guy needs more." "Is he rich?" "No, he's not rich enough. Give him more."

I want people to make money. I want people to be rich. That's a good thing. But I want social responsibility. I want the people at the top of the companies out there, when it comes to working with the people of this province, to understand that they have a responsibility to treat workers fairly. That's what bargaining is all about.

So I say to my friend, sorry, I am not going to support this legislation, and I actually encourage people to vote against it, because this is an intrusion into bargaining. It's yet again the Conservatives showing clearly whose side they're on. They're on the side of the big guys, and they're against the workers, and that's something that I cannot stand for.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to join the debate. I have to congratulate the member for bringing this to the House. It's a private member's bill, and I have to say that probably he had some good intentions bringing forth this particular bill. I'm not trying to demean the title of the bill itself, but I have two particular problems, not with the intent that the member from Durham brought this bill, but with the content and the heading. Anyone who sees we are dealing with a bill, the Sick Days are for Sick People Act, must be wondering what the heck this is.

The member is quite correct: The bill is very small. It's got three short paragraphs, Speaker. I have no prob-

lem with the first. I have no problem with the second. My problem is with the third, and I'm going to read it for the benefit of the House and for the benefit of the people listening out there. I'm sure that the member did not address this particular paragraph, and this is the crux of the bill itself.

It says, "If an employee of a public sector employer uses a sick day but does not, if required, provide sufficient evidence of sickness in accordance with the regulations, the employee must repay any compensation received from the employer in respect of the sick day," meaning that we are not trusting our employees, that they are, in other words, just flouting—

Interjection.

Hon. Mario Sergio: This is in writing, my friend. This is in writing. This is in the bill. When we put this in writing, we are sending a terrible message that our people are frauds, that our people are defrauding the public purse, and I think we—

Interjection.

Hon. Mario Sergio: It's right in the bill.

But, Speaker, let me say this: One thing the bill does not address—and I hope the member is listening—is it doesn't say that this pertains to existing agreements already or future contracts. It does not say that. Otherwise, how can we, as a government, as members of this House, and dutiful, present ourselves? I have to say, we have a wonderful, strong, very ethical workforce out there. How can we face those people we have negotiated with for months, sometimes longer than that, and reached bona fide agreements, bona fide contracts, and on a whim we can say, "We're going to change them."

Someone once said, "What's good for the goose is good for the gander." Are we saying then—

Interjection.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Well, with all due respect, I have to say that when we negotiate with our people, with our employees, in good faith and then we say, "Now we're going to make some changes," they should have the same right. They should have the same right that one day they can turn around and say, "Well, you know what? We didn't like what we did," or "We want to change it, so we're going back on our word." I think this sends a very unfair message, not only for the intent that the member has brought the bill to the House, but for the content of the bill itself.

I certainly can't support it. I certainly can't support it, because we are doing nothing but demeaning our employees. These are people who work day in and day out for us and for our families. We just can't go back on our word and say, "Well, because now we have changed our minds, we are trying to change, rip up a contract that has been negotiated with unions, with representatives." We have had long consultations to reach this particular agreement, and now we say, "Well, you know what? We don't believe you are sick. Therefore, we're going to put it in writing that you will have to provide a certain medical record or whatever"—I mean, it is already in place—"if you are sick. But to go this particular route, I think, is very demeaning.

We can call them sick days, of course. Who would want to take a day off and call it a sick day without being sick?

Interjection: Lots.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I don't believe that. If there are some—it could be there are some—then they should be looking at the consequences as well. They should be looking at the consequences. But to put this particular bill in writing as it is, I think, is a disservice to our employees, and our employers as well. I think we have good, solid contracts in place, and we should respect that. It binds both. We have to respect the employees and we have to have, at the same time, respect for ourselves, otherwise where we would go from here?

1410

Speaker, I want to leave some time for my colleague the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, who wants to make remarks on this bill itself. I thank you, Speaker, and I thank the member for introducing the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise in this House this afternoon and speak to Bill 25, the Sick Days are for Sick People Act.

I applaud the member from Durham for introducing this piece of legislation. My colleague has introduced many bills in his time here, and this is yet another excellent idea. I'll tell you why. At the core of this bill, it's all about fairness and balance. The abuse of sick days costs the province money. It limits the effectiveness of the public sector, and it hurts fellow public sector employees. Sick days must be there for those who need them and not for those who wish to abuse the system.

If—or should I say "when"?—this bill passes, it will allow workers in the Ontario public sector to bank unused sick days in the unfortunate event that they face illness in the future. I think that's fair. These sick days are a safety net to use in the event of illness so that employees are able to take time off work in order to get better and to help nurse a loved one back to health.

This bill is also fair in the way that it will be implemented. It is important to stress that this act would not impact the collectively bargained rights of the current public sector employees, as may have been implied by my colleague of the third party. All existing sick-leave gratuities would be honoured. That will prevent us from getting into some potentially messy issues while making a positive change, moving forward.

Another key element of this bill is its mechanism to help prevent the abuse of sick days by employees paid by the Ontario taxpayers. Abuse of sick leave reduces the effectiveness of the entire public sector, and that's something that impacts each and every citizen of this province. No one wants to do extra work to cover for someone who is not genuinely sick. If you take the day off and you weren't sick, if you cannot provide proper evidence—as my colleague from the government had mentioned earlier, there are certain guidelines in place that ask for specific medical documents to prove that you

were sick—such as a doctor's note, then you will give back any compensation you received for that sick day.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business released a study in 2012 on sick leaves in the Canadian public sector. Did you know that the overall public sector average is 12.9 days compared to only 8.2 days in the private sector? I doubt that employees in the public sector just happen to be less healthy than those in the private sector. Now, there may be some abuse going on, and this bill seeks to just simply tighten the rules to make sure that everyone gets a fair deal—a fair deal for Ontario taxpayers who pay the salaries of those abusing the system and a fair deal for the majority of public sector employees who do the right thing.

Like many in this House, I come from a background of private sector experience. Throughout all my experience in the private sector, we were never able to bank sick days for later fiscal compensation. Sick days were there for us if we needed them, if we became ill. We had to prove we were sick to make sure that those sick days were used by sick people.

We must do the right thing as elected representatives and look out for Ontarians. It is for these reasons that I will be supporting the member from Durham's bill, the Sick Days are for Sick People Act. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad to speak to this bill because, as the member alluded to, a lot of us come from the private sector. In my experience in the private sector, we had 10 sick days per calendar year—business days. With that, I have to say I'm pretty much a very healthy person, and probably my whole career—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: God bless.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: That's right: God bless. And I hope to continue that health track record from here on forward until whenever I decide that my health isn't well; we'll have to go from there.

The thing is, where I worked in the private sector for about 22 years, I probably took—I don't know—maybe three sick days. I never thought once in my mind that I would ever abuse a sick day. But there was an interesting point, because as time went on and I got older and I wasn't sick, I kept thinking, "Gosh, I don't use my sick days, and you either use them or you lose them."

We talked in the boardroom one time; we had a meeting and employees felt that whether they took sick days or not, those unused sick days would be wasted, because nowadays there's a lot of people who have a lot of illnesses. As you mature, there's a lot of cancer, there's a lot of stress. What we just asked our employer collectively—we didn't have a collective agreement, but we asked our employer collectively, "Could you possibly look at us banking those sick days for using them in the future?" so that if someone did have an illness that was more than a month or two months off, then they could actually use that and not suffer economic challenges, because we had short-term sickness that couldn't extend past that one or two months. That was something I

thought was actually very fair, because when you are working somewhere for 20 years and you haven't used your sick days, should an unfortunate physical incident occur and you might need those sick days, that would have been a great comfort to many of the people that I worked with.

There were a lot of women, and a lot of women, of course, are—there were single women who were struggling to help with the raising of their children. It was a women-dominated environment.

That takes me to another point with regard to this bill. When we look at public sector workers and we look at the education piece, in the public school system, a lot of teachers are female, and there's sniffles and flus coming into the workplace.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: At the elementary level.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: At the elementary level; exactly. These women, these teachers, are exposed to a lot of illnesses. I've talked to teachers and they've felt that sometimes they couldn't take the time off because they didn't want to lose that valuable time with their students. So they suffered through those sick days; they spread the germs. They went home and spread it to their family. But what happened was—and we're talking about not banking sick days. So a lot of the times, they—I use the example of public school teachers—came to work.

In the end, if they are coming to work sick—which I did many times, sneezing all over my fellow co-workers. Some people were afraid to take a sick day. They were afraid to take a sick day because sometimes they felt that, as the member talked about, people would abuse a sick day. So you really had to feel like you couldn't even walk into work before you used a sick day, and that's not the intent of a sick day. If you aren't feeling well, you should be able to take a sick day.

If you don't need to use a sick day, that's where our collective agreements come in. That's when people can bargain whether or not they could look at using that as an agreement to negotiate: If they're not going to take a wage increase, if that's something that isn't available, maybe they could bank their sick days and use them at the end of their retirement. We talked about collective agreements, and this bill is an unconstitutional way of opening up this topic and it could actually cost the taxpayers more.

This bill, "Sick Days are for Sick People"—a little bit of an insult. I think everybody knows that there are sick days available for when you are sick. Having the impression or the thought that people are going to take time off when they are not sick isn't giving people the benefit of the doubt. I think most people in Ontario, most working people, are very honest and they're not going to abuse the system.

1420

I don't agree with this bill, Speaker. It's not a bill that I would support for sure. I think we need to give workers the benefit of the doubt that they're going to use sick days for what they're entitled to and not force them to

bring evidence of a sick day. That's already in most employers'—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a sick bill.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, it's a sick bill, as my one member has said. It needs a little revitalization; it needs to be a healthier bill. This is a sick bill, so I'm not going to vote for that bill.

Like I said, employers already have that three-day rule. That's the average rule. When you're sick for three days or more, you bring a doctor's note. People aren't going to take three days off to just put their feet up and have a vacation; they're really sick. And you know, Speaker, this year was the highest flu season in—I'll speak for London. Emergency rooms were packed. I was sick for the first time in a very long time, and I actually took some time off work—two days. I couldn't get out of bed. My son was sick. I passed it on to my daughter; I passed it on to my husband. Those are what sick days are meant to be.

Please don't assume that people who are sick are abusing sick days; they're not. No one is going to pretend to be sick if they're there for the use of what's intended. When you're sick and you need time off, you take your sick days. I'm sorry; I don't agree with the bill that people are abusing it. I think most people are very honest and they wouldn't be abusing a situation that's to their detriment. Who wants to be found out when they are perhaps doing something like that? I think people don't want to be called out on not being sick. I think people take these sick days very seriously when they have a job, and I don't think that there is the abuse and I don't think there's a need for this bill. So I'm going to say I disagree with this bill and leave a little bit of time for the member to give his summation about it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: It's my pleasure to speak to the sick bill.

I think bringing up the bill is very worthwhile. To be frank, it's something that everybody's talking about, because it has been brought forward with the legislation we've had with the teachers, and it has come up. Therefore, I think it's legitimate for the member to bring the bill forward. It's a good analysis for us to undertake and it's valuable to do, and I don't deny him the right to do that. Like most of these private members' bills, they're good debates.

Questions have been raised. An element of the fact is that sometimes, too many of these types of bills are brought forward by the party opposite. One of the issues I have with this bill is that you'll never see them bring forward a bill that will talk about abuses by the private sector or by private employers. I brought forward a bill about people who run our oil companies who tolerate the fact that people who work at gas stations are paid minimum wage. Then, if someone steals gas from the gas station, they take money out of their wages to pay for the gas theft. That's tolerated in the private sector and it's

much too common. I don't see any bills about this type of abuse brought forward by the party opposite.

I also know that the member opposite is a great fan of Jack Mintz. Jack Mintz is on the front page of the *Globe* today, and today is budget day in Ottawa. Jack Mintz says that this government in Ottawa is a strange government. The Minister of Finance is even telling banks to raise mortgage rates. How does that help the little guy? Somehow, the Minister of Finance, who's not supposed to intervene in the marketplace, says, "I can intervene there," and Jack Mintz says that that's stupid. Your friend Jack Mintz says that. I just wanted to mention it.

Also on the same page in the *Globe*, I see another friend of the member from Durham: Konrad Yakabuski—not the MPP, but the brother. He makes an interesting point. I know the member is very interested in balancing the books in the province, and that's what the bottom line is here: You're trying to ensure that we have the appropriate revenues and there isn't any shortfall, and I applaud them for that. But do you know what Konrad Yakabuski says, especially on budget day? He says that the House is in order in Ottawa, but the provinces pay. If the member opposite and his fellow colleagues are really serious about doing something about Ontario's bottom line, he would look at the fact that the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates—here's what he says, that "cumulatively, provincial and local governments would need to cut spending or raise taxes by \$36 billion annually to achieve fiscal sustainability" if the federal government continues to claw out of the provinces and not give back to the provinces.

This even includes your friendly province of Alberta, who all of a sudden has a problem with the balance, right? It's not just Ontario, not Quebec—even Alberta. This is what Yakabuski is saying. He's saying, "Hey, listen: There's a \$36-billion bill coming," unless the gentleman—our former colleague here; remember when he sat in the House and he did so well with the budgets here? I wonder if, in Ottawa, he's going to do something about that \$36-billion download onto the cities and the province of Ontario.

And then there's another interesting comment from another *Globe* and *Mail* article, from Margaret Wente. Interestingly enough, she says that maybe your federal cousins should get their house in order, because they have some of the highest absentee rates of workers in Canada: Every day, about 19,000 federal employees are off on sick leave. The Treasury Board says that they take about 18 days off a year and that they bank sick days that leave a liability that amounts to \$5 billion in sick days; this is Flaherty's people.

Sure, we have issues here in Ontario, but unless we recognize that we have to fix some of our federal rules and regulations and the way they treat and download on the cities and download on the provinces, we're going to have a difficult time with our finances. By just saying, "Well, we can solve the problems by picking on the workers and the sick days," and the next day it will be something else—it's not going to do it.

The real macro issue is the fact that the people of Ontario work very hard. We don't have oil; we don't have potash. We work very hard in construction. We work very hard in health care. We work very hard in our minds. We work very hard fishing and farming. We work very hard in this province.

Today's the day of the federal budget. I thought the member from Durham would maybe have something that says that maybe the federal government should help the good people of Ontario by providing a few pennies for our roads, for our bridges and for our public transit. We are the only jurisdiction in the Western world where the federal government does not supply any financial support for mass transit. Denmark, Italy, France, Japan, Taiwan—in Ontario, no federal money, so maybe your friends in Ottawa should be helping us with our finances. That would be the next bill I hope you introduce. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 25 today, the Sick Days are for Sick People Act. I'd like to start first with a quote by the noted economist Art Laffer: "Honestly, it's not liberal, it's not conservative, it's not left-wing; it's economics. If you tax people who work and you pay people who don't work, don't be" bloody "surprised if you get a lot of people" who don't work. That's exactly what we've gotten here with our government's current policies toward sick days.

According to a recent study by the CFIB—the Canadian Federation of Independent Business—the average provincial employee takes nearly twice as many sick days as the average small business worker. Simply put, we're getting what we should expect: By paying people not to work, they're not working. In the Liberal government's ongoing competition with California to be the most indebted non-sovereign jurisdiction in the world, we are literally paying people to do nothing. It's ironic, given all of the McGuinty–Wynne government's talk.

1430

During question period today, the Minister of Finance said, "We're trying to ensure that we get proper value for" the taxpayer—proper value. Just how are we getting value for money by paying people who do not work? What benefit does the carpenter in Carleton Place, the miner in Sudbury, the banker in Toronto or the machinist in Windsor get from paying people not to work? I'm not sure what my honourable colleague the finance minister would say, but I think the answer is evident to anyone with a stitch of common sense: We are getting no benefit at all. The hard-working people of Ontario know that people should only get paid for the work they do, but that insight seems to be lost on our state workers and clearly lost on both parties of the coalition government that we have here today.

Some members of this House know that in addition to working as an electrician, both unionized and non-union in private firms, I also worked for the public sector for a period of time. In the private sector, if someone was genuinely sick, they would take the day off. Our labour

laws protect actual sick people, and this bill only reinforces that protection. But working for the government, working for the state, was very different for me. The culture was very different. Though there were certainly people who used their sick days because they were actually sick, many, many used them as paid vacation days. It was very disappointing and depressing for me to hear fellow employees talk about when they were going to get sick and what they were going to do on their sick days and the like. Indeed, I eventually became so sick of all the hogwash sick days that even politics seemed like a better alternative than working in the bureaucracy.

Speaker, you know that both the Minister of Finance and the member from Beaches–East York spoke of the need for a balanced approach to solving the Liberal government's financial mess. The member for Durham's bill does just that. It balances the need of genuinely sick people with the pocketbooks of the people who actually pay for this government largesse. It will save us hundreds of millions of dollars.

I just want to emphasize for those people who have not read the bill yet, as we've heard from the NDP and the Liberals, that what this does is prevent people from cashing in their accumulated sick days at retirement and retiring early with those paid sick days. That's why I'm supporting this member. I do hope and trust that all the members of the NDP can take the time to read the bill, as well as the members of the Liberal Party, and actually find that stitch of common sense that is so required.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to speak real fast. I disagree with my friend from Durham and all the other Conservative friends that I have. When the Conservative member from Lanark says we haven't read the bill, we know exactly what the bill says. The bill ends the practice of cashing in on accumulated sick days, of being compensated for unused sick days in any way. We understand that.

You can't do it. You cannot legislate something that has been negotiated, because if you were to do that, you would be taken to court and you would lose—and you probably know that. But it's irrelevant, because you know that. What this is, is a concerted, determined, wilful attack on people who work in the civil service. That's what it is.

The problem, member from Lanark, is that you weren't here when your good buddy Mike Harris was here for 10 long, painful years, and I would have thought that you guys had your lesson and were ready to move on with a different agenda. But you guys have learned nothing. You come back with the same old agenda that your buddy brought years ago. Why not go after the real people, the real public with money, the ones who have the real bucks, the millionaires, the ones that we give corporate tax cuts to, both Liberals and Tories, who park their money in places where they do not invest in jobs? Why don't you go after them? Why don't you fine Tories go after them? And you—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —as well. That's where the money is, not going after civil servants who negotiated a deal. And at the end of it, these people say, "The deal don't matter; we're going to end it." Please. You can't do that; you know it. You can't do it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm not really sure if Hansard is going to catch all that because certainly the member wasn't speaking in his microphone, but I hope the theatrics actually make the nightly news, because it might show the circus of what that was.

But, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to speak to your bill, too.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm happy you're going to speak to my bill, member for Trinity-Spadina, because we have to really talk about that bill and how you're going to support it. I actually wore—if you can tell, member from Trinity-Spadina—my solidarity tie today, my orange and blue tie, just for you.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have to say I commend the bill brought forth by the member from Durham, and I have to say in my time that I have a few things. First and foremost, I know the minister responsible for seniors spoke about defrauding Ontarians, and I think the only party that's responsible for defrauding Ontarians are the Liberals with the scandals that they brought forth—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Rob Leone: I withdraw.

Then the member for Timmins-James Bay had talked eloquently about private sector bargaining, but we do see something different in the public sector, Mr. Speaker. I have to say this as someone who was part of the public sector prior to entering politics: I know how bargaining actually operates a little differently in the public sector, in the sense that every bargaining unit actually looks around and shops around for who's got the best deal, and that best deal then becomes negotiated for everybody. As that happens, salaries, compensation, benefits start to rise.

This isn't about kicking the little guy and helping the rich, as the member for Timmins-James Bay and maybe the member for Trinity-Spadina were alluding to—I'm not really sure. This is about the fact that there is limited public money in the public sector, and when compensation rises at a point far beyond our ability to pay, there are two options, and we're confronted with those options today, Mr. Speaker. The two options are simply: You're going to lay off people or you have to reduce the compensation of benefits in order for things to go forward.

Rather than kicking the little guy and laying off public servants, what we're suggesting is everyone take a standstill. Make sure that compensation doesn't rise excessively—to be prudent fiscal managers, to be responsible of the public purse. I think our number one

obligation as elected officials is to do that. So rather than kicking the little guy, what we're doing is supporting all public servants in this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member for Durham, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. John O'Toole: It has been an interesting yet not very informative debate on the other side. I'm quite surprised. It's evident from my listening and paying attention that they really haven't read the bill, and that's really what's disheartening here, because in all the great theatrical gestures that have been made, certainly by my good friend from Trinity-Spadina—very theatrical, a thespian. I'd say he's a thespian for sure. There's no question about that.

I would only say that I did listen to the original speaker from Timmins-James Bay. He was very passionate—I think a former union president in the mining industry.

I would say that the most informative was the NDP member from London-Fanshawe. I think she actually, having some private sector experience, recognized the reality here. What it is, is first of all, the bill should be titled, I think, Respect for Taxpayers. Wrap around that the context of where Ontario is. Ontario is in a significant problem: potentially a \$30-billion operating deficit. That's about 15 to 20 cents on every dollar we're spending that's borrowed. The third-highest expenditure is debt interest—almost \$11 billion a year—and right now interest is very low. I'm telling you, with all this money that's being pumped—inflationary money for infrastructure money, phony money like the \$3 trillion in the States—that's future interest, because it creates inflation without growth in the economy by printing money. When there's way too much inflation, you have to have higher interest. Interest always has to be higher than the rate of inflation.

1440

That's simple Economics 101. And with low interest and high debt, going to almost \$300 billion in Ontario, it's frightening, and I think those are the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much. We'll vote on this item at the end of regular business.

LIVING WITHIN OUR MEANS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉCESSITÉ DE VIVRE SELON NOS MOYENS

Mr. Leone moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to enact the Balanced Budget Act, 2013 and to amend the Financial Administration Act /
Projet de loi 26, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur l'équilibre budgétaire et modifiant la Loi sur l'administration financière.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to rise in this House to speak to Bill 26. The short name of Bill 26 is the Living Within Our Means Act.

I want to first highlight the specific name of this act, the Living Within Our Means Act. We in the province of Ontario, I think—and all members of the Legislature, go home to their families and they actually look over their budgets. I'm pretty sure they look at their bank account statements, and if they have the benefit of having stock portfolios, they are looking at that every day. They're making sure that the money that they have at their disposal to spend on their daily activities is enough to sustain themselves from month to month or week to week or day to day, depending on how they're managing this.

All Ontarians are asking the people of this Legislature to do is to simply follow what we do when we go home each night: to live within our means. I think it's the responsibility of the government to stand up and say with definitive terms, in no uncertain terms, that we are going to live within our means. That's why the bill is named as it is.

The bill contains, obviously, two major important acts and legislation that it's discussing. One is a Balanced Budget Act, and members of this Legislature will know in particular that we had at one time a Balanced Budget Act in the province of Ontario that was repealed in 2004. This act seeks to enact a Balanced Budget Act for 2013 that builds upon the promise of that bill.

Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight for members of this Legislature what we know to be true.

Every party and every caucus in this Legislature has stood and said that they are committed to balancing the budget, and we have our timelines. Those timelines are set. We want to make sure that we balance this budget within a reasonable time frame, and this bill accounts for that. We're not saying that this budget has to be balanced tomorrow, although I think a lot of Ontarians would like to see, at some time, some recognition that we are concerned about the fiscal health of our province, because the fiscal health of our province, frankly, is in terrible shape. But we are saying that by April 1, 2017, we should balance the budget. We're giving the government the runway to balance the budget in a reasonable time frame. We wanted to approach this bill in a very reasonable way, because this is something that you've committed to. This is something that all parties have committed to. If this is something concretely believed by all parties, then they should offer a little bit of accountability and reassurance to the people of the province of Ontario that we are, in fact, going to balance our budget, and that if we don't balance our budget by the timelines we've stated, we're prepared to take the bullet, we're prepared to take a pay cut. That is, I think, the kind of accountability that we seek in the province of Ontario.

I know in the last session I had the privilege of introducing the first piece of private members' business in this Legislature, in the first session of the 40th Parliament. Mr. Speaker, that motion that I brought forth was about accountability. It was about ensuring that the promises made by the government, particularly with

respect to hospital infrastructure announcements, were promises they were prepared to keep. So I asked the government, in that motion, to table plans brought forth to ensure there is accountability. How are we going to pay for these infrastructure projects? What are the timelines? What are the development stages of these projects? This bill is a continuation of that theme. We need to show Ontarians that we're prepared to stand by our commitments.

People are cynical about politics, and part of that cynicism is driven by the fact we aren't prepared to stand by our commitments. I think it's a responsibility of members of this Legislature to do that, to stand behind the commitments we make and be prepared to take the financial hit if we can't keep the promises that we make.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, one potential issue we may encounter from time to time is that our projections are sometimes thrown off the rails. That can happen when there's a natural disaster where money obviously has to be spent, perhaps in a time of drought to help the farmers who have a crop devastation. It might be because of a medical outbreak of a proportion that hampers people's movement and the economy's movement of people and goods. We want to account for that as well. This bill actually suggests that in times of natural disaster, the Minister of Finance can present that case to the people of this Legislature to ask for some grace because of some unintended natural disaster that might have thrown the fiscal projections off-kilter.

The same thing is true of an unforeseen economic downturn. This bill also accounts for those circumstances as well. I know we faced those circumstances in the province of Ontario recently. When your revenues fall below 5%, and that 5% reduction is not as a result of a planned decrease in revenues, this doesn't apply in those circumstances as well.

I want to assure the people of this Legislature and the people of Ontario that great pains were taken in the crafting of this bill to ensure it was reasonable, to ensure we were going to come here in this assembly, 107 men and women, to think concretely about the promises we've made and to ensure direct accountability for what we've talked about. I think that's all Ontarians really want from us in this Legislature. They want us to come here, talk, debate and make sure that when we leave, we've come actually with the purpose of keeping the promises that we've made.

So I'm very proud to present this bill and what the balanced budget part of this legislation can do for the people of the province in reassuring them that the promises we make are the promises we're prepared to keep. I know that our party has stated in our white paper, *Paths to Prosperity: A New Deal for the Public Sector*, which is available to all people in the province of Ontario, that we are committed and we want to seek a commitment to balance the books by April 1, 2017. That is our timeline. That's our commitment.

We know we have a number of things we have to do in order to get there. Part of that is to support my friend from Durham's bill, the Sick Days are for Sick People

Act, because we have to understand the pressures of compensation in the public sector and what that does to the public purse, keeping in mind, of course, that we want to make sure to the greatest extent possible that we're avoiding catastrophic layoffs, because we don't have the money. The money has in fact run out.

The second part of this bill, Mr. Speaker, talks about limiting the amount of debt that we have in the province of Ontario. I want to be very clear about this. Maybe I'll reference this by way of a very personal public service announcement. I want to say to all members of the Legislature that within the next month, my wife and I are going to have our third child.

Applause.

Mr. Rob Leone: I hope that's not the only applause I'm going to get from members of this Legislature with respect to this bill. We have to keep in mind that we can't let the poor financial decisions we are making, and that this government in particular is making, be put on the backs of our children. The per capita debt in the province of Ontario is close to \$20,000, so when my third child is born within the next month, Mr. Speaker, he is going to share that burden. Within his first breath, he is going to have \$20,000 slapped on his back. And I think that's a troubling thing.

1450

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Look what you did to that poor kid.

Mr. Rob Leone: What we did to the poor kid? I'm sure we'll have some discussion about that. But I think that that government over there doubled the size of the debt in the province of Ontario, and maybe when the NDP were in power, they had significant a deficit at the end of their term as well. I'm not really sure about that.

The facts speak for themselves, Mr. Speaker. I do want to state that if we look comparatively at all provinces in this country and we look at the debt-to-GDP ratio, the debt-to-GDP ratio in the province of Ontario is about 40%. In Saskatchewan, for example, it's about 5%; in Alberta, still before their budget is tabled, it's at 0%. Ontario is second-last, second-last to only the province of Quebec, which has a 50% debt-to-GDP ratio. This is about not putting the poor financial decisions on the backs of our future generation, of my kids, your kids, our kids. We should respect that going forward.

If we look comparatively—we talked about Denmark and a lot of countries earlier—10 years ago, there were several countries that had debt-to-GDP ratios in the world similar to where Ontario is at right now, about 40%. Where are they 10 years later, Mr. Speaker?

Spain: Without changing course, Spain is at a 56% debt-to-GDP ratio, and we know the kind of economic turmoil we see in Spain. The United States of America has a debt-to-GDP ratio of 73%, and we know that that is going up as we speak. Again, the United Kingdom, 10 years ago, had a debt-to-GDP ratio of about 40%. The United Kingdom right now is at about 73% as well. France, 10 years ago, again a similar situation to the province of Ontario: France's debt-to-GDP ratio—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sarkozy, that spendthrift. Ils dépensent trop, monsieur le Président.

Mr. Rob Leone: He says it well, but what he hasn't said is that that debt-to-GDP ratio is 81%.

Of course, I know that there are problems that we see in the area around Greece. Certainly, Cyprus has issued some problems with respect to stealing people's money, and I hope we never get to that stage. Greece, again with a debt-to-GDP ratio that within the last decade or two was similar to where Ontario is at today, at 40%; today, their debt-to-GDP ratio is at a staggering 153%.

If we're really serious about getting our fiscal house in order, we have to be prepared to make the tough decisions today in order for us to not become a Spain, a United States of America, a United Kingdom, a France or, God help us, Mr. Speaker, a Greece. Let's make those tough decisions today. Let's work to give the people of Ontario some assurance that we're prepared to balance the budget and not put our future generation at risk. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It is an honour to be able to have the opportunity to speak to this bill, which is creatively short-titled *Living Within Our Means*. I believe very strongly that governments need to live within our means, that taxpayers deserve value for their hard-earned money. But this bill falls very short. It is nothing more than rhetoric. It promises results but it has neither the tools nor the capacity to deliver them. This bill is nothing more than a gimmick.

The biggest shortcoming of this bill may be the fact that balancing the budget is in many ways in the eyes of the beholder. How many times have we had federal or provincial governments balance the books only to later have a new government step in and say that the previous government operated a deficit. If the member is truly concerned with delivering balanced budgets and accountability, then this bill would be about putting in place accounting principles and setting a standard of practice that ensures that no matter who crunches the numbers, the bottom line is the same. This bill doesn't do that. Not only that, but there have been previous bills in this very Legislature that were intended—and I will use that term very lightly—to protect taxpayers, such as the Taxpayer Protection Act, which was introduced by the PC government in the 1990s. Did that act, that was introduced by the very same PCs, force them to abide by the legislation? No. In fact, the present leader of the official opposition voted not once but twice to override the act when he was a cabinet minister so that none of the penalties would apply to him. So, not only is this bill frivolous, but the party advocating for it lacks credibility on the issue.

I've mentioned it before in this House, and it deserves repeating: When it comes to the federal and provincial fiscal track records, which are tracked by the federal Conservative government through the publicly available Fiscal Reference Tables, it's the NDP that comes out on top. Since 1980, 46.3%—

Interjections.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: You know, the Conservatives should listen to these numbers—46.3% of NDP budgets have been in surplus.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sorry?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Can I have a point of order? Could I please ask, through you, that the members could respectfully listen to the member's comments, because I'm having trouble hearing it?

Interjection.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Anyway, as I've said before: Since 1980, 46.3% of NDP budgets have been in surplus. This is compared to a much lower 40.4% rate of Conservative surplus budgets and an abysmal 25.7% for the Liberals. Why is that? That's because New Democrats have a deep respect for the hard-working families who are paying these tax bills. We are concerned with actual impacts of our decisions—what they will have—and we will not use gimmicks such as the downloading of costs to another level of government in an attempt to make ourselves look good. Most notably, this happened during the Mike Harris years, when he downloaded the costs for billions of dollars of responsibilities onto municipal ledgers in order to make his own budget appear to balance. The end result was that Harris balanced his books on paper—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex come to order.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: —but taxpayers didn't save a dime, and municipalities had less money to update infrastructure and offer their core existing services.

Do you know what? I see the mayor of Kenora; I see Dave Canfield, who is in the gallery. His community is acutely aware of the serious financial hardships that were created by the PC government of the 1990s, because then they downloaded over \$100 million of roads, bridges and culverts for his community alone. The end result was a huge collateral deficit for the hard-working people of this province.

Similarly, there has been a great deal of attention paid to privatizing profitable organizations like the LCBO and the Ontario lotteries in order to come up with some cash in the short term. In the long term, the government will be short billions of dollars in annual revenue and will have to raise taxes or cut services. But, according to those who are advocating for these changes, that's someone else's problem—perhaps that of our children.

We need to stop governing in the short term and we need to avoid political legislation such as Bill 115 and legislated wage freezes which look good on paper—they may sound good—but have been shown, time and time again, that they actually cost taxpayers more in the long term.

Balancing the budget is about choices. It's about showing leadership that isn't just concerned with appearing to deliver results today but is concerned with cutting costs and planning for tomorrow: strategies like investing in health promotion and home care, which is

known to drastically reduce the costs of delivering health care; creating fair social assistance rates that allow recipients to get out of the cycle of dependency; and creating a long-term infrastructure plan. Those are meaningful ways, meaningful steps, that we can take to bring down costs and to ensure the fiscal viability of this province.

This bill talks tough but it lacks any teeth to deliver the results. And it's not even headed in the right direction. It is high on rhetoric but it's entirely lacking in substance. For that reason, I absolutely cannot support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm going to share my time with the government House leader, but I did want to comment on this because I read the bill through. I know that the member from Cambridge is a former university professor, a very distinguished PhD, so I was quite looking forward to reading his bill. I read it over, and I am disappointed, because I found it incomprehensible, unfathomable, unworkable and, most of all, unreadable. I couldn't understand it.

1500

I noted your comments, member opposite, where he said—in his remarks, he said, "I took great pains in drafting this bill." Well, I was looking for something just as simple as readability. I think it's important just to give you a flavour for this. This is just the explanatory note; this is not the details of the bill, the details in the sections of the act, but this is just by way of general opening explanation, to help the layperson and the members understand it.

"Beginning with the 2017-2018 fiscal year, the executive council must plan for a balanced budget and the Minister of Finance must present a balanced budget to the assembly. Special provision is made with respect to expenditures arising from such extraordinary circumstances as a natural disaster or the declaration of war." There's the possibility under this act that if Ontario declares war, then there are a whole lot of things that kick in. But anyway, that's an extreme statement. "Special provision is also made for a decline in revenues of 5 per cent or more that does not result from a decrease in taxes.

"If a deficit is planned, the executive council is required to develop a recovery plan for achieving a balanced budget in the future. Details of the recovery plan must be included in the multi-year fiscal plan in the budget papers.

"If there is a deficit, the salary payable to members of the executive council under the Executive Council Act is reduced. Different rules are established when an initial deficit is more than 1 per cent of revenues and when an initial deficit is lower. When there is a lower deficit, provision is made for it to be offset by an equivalent surplus of revenues in the following year to avoid the initial salary reduction.

"For an initial deficit, the salary reduction for the members of the executive council is 25 per cent of the salary payable under the Executive Council Act, and lasts

for one year. If there is a deficit in the following year, the reduction is increased to 50 per cent, and lasts a year for each consecutive year in which there is a deficit.

"Section 4 of the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004, which currently requires the executive council to plan for a balanced budget and specifies when a deficit is permitted, is repealed," and so on.

That's just the opener. Then if you want the details, let me give you the flavour of this. This is the definition of "deficit" under subsection (2) of the act:

"For the purposes of this act, the province has a deficit in a fiscal year if 'A' is greater than 'B'." Then it goes on to tell us when A is greater than B. It says,

"[W]here,

"A' is the amount of the expenditures for the year less the sum of,

"(a) any expenditure described in paragraph 1 or 2 of subsection 2(2) in the year, and

"(b) the amount, if any, by which the revenues in the year have declined since the previous fiscal year for a reason other than a reduction in a tax rate under a designated tax statute or the PVAT rate under the comprehensive integrated tax coordination agreement, if the decline is at least 5 per cent of the previous year's revenues." That's A. Now here's B:

"B' is the sum of the revenues and the accumulated net surplus, if any, for the year."

Then it goes on:

"(3) The amount of the accumulated net surplus for a fiscal year is the amount by which the sum of the revenues for the previous three fiscal years exceeds the sum of the expenditures for the previous three fiscal years.

"(4) Despite subsection (3), the amount of the accumulated net surplus for the fiscal year beginning on April 1, 2017 is the amount by which the revenues for the year—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You cannot interrupt debate for a point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: Yes, you can. There's no rule like that.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the member speak to the bill, not read the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member is staying within the confinements.

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm reading from the bill; this is the bill.

Anyway, it goes on to say, "... is the amount by which the revenues for the previous fiscal year exceed the expenditures for the previous fiscal year." Then it goes on.

"(5) Despite subsection (3), the amount of the accumulated net surplus for the fiscal year beginning on April 1, 2018 is the amount by which the sum of the revenues for the previous two fiscal years exceeds the sum of the expenditures for the previous two fiscal years."

I called an accountant friend of mine and read this to him and I said, "I'm a lawyer. I'm used to reading complicated documents, but I'm not an accountant and I'm having trouble getting my head around this. Can you help me out? Because I have to speak to it Thursday afternoon." He read it over, and you know what he said? He said, "Well, I'm reminded of the old saying. I think the way that bill's drafted, it fits into this description." He said, "It's best summed up—you should ask the member opposite: How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?" That was his response to it.

This is a silly piece of political posturing. If it passes—I think it takes effect in 2017-18. So I suppose if it does pass—well, I'm certainly not going to vote for it—we've at least got from 2013 to 2017, 2018. We've got four or five years to try to figure out what it all means and, frankly, I think there's more meaning in the expression, "How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?"

This is a silly piece of political Thursday afternoon private members' posturing. I would have expected more of a distinguished doctor of philosophy from a distinguished university—McMaster University.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 26, the Living Within Our Means Act, introduced by my good friend and colleague the member for Cambridge.

I would first like to start out by applauding the member because he, unlike the current government, has presented a serious plan to balance the budget in a timely fashion. He and I both know, as fathers, that we must take immediate steps to rein in runaway public sector spending to preserve the same standard of living for our children.

Just think that my son Murphy, who's just 14 months old, has already been saddled with a burden of more than \$20,000 of provincial debt. This isn't the way Ontario should be. We simply can't afford to spend like drunken sailors today, only to sober up a few years from now to realize that the party is over.

Anyone who has ever been faced with a crisis or emergency will tell you that being cautious and being incremental will not save you. The only way forward is to move quickly, confidently and boldly in the direction that you know is right.

Now, I was glad to see that, in fact, one Liberal recognized the severity of Ontario's fiscal situation. In fact, he described the province's debt as a ticking time bomb—

Interjection: Who was that?

Mr. Michael Harris: That was the former finance minister, and unfortunately—well, fortunately—he is no longer part of the government; however, he was part of the problem.

I have to say that I am truly troubled by the Liberal government's backtracking on its commitment in the

throne speech to balance the budget by 2017-18. Over the last couple of weeks, we've seen the new finance minister waffle on the government's commitment to balance the books on a multiple number of occasions and, in fact, he's refused to rule out tax increases on those middle-class families. This is unacceptable. Ontario taxpayers should not be left to pick up the tab for the Liberals' financial mess.

Part of governing is being accountable to the people and being responsible with the hard-earned money they pay in taxes. That is exactly what this bill will do. Since we've seen that the Liberal government continues to refuse to balance the books on its own, we need to put legislative rules in place to hold cabinet accountable.

Now I know that I'm almost out of time, but I want to point out that each minute I've been speaking, the Liberal government has added \$23,000 to the provincial debt. That means during the time that I gave this speech, roughly—it was three minutes long—\$69,000 down the hole, down the drain.

As I mentioned before, a young son of mine, 14 months old—and Mr. Leone, the member for Cambridge, just announced recently that he and his wife and his family will be expecting their third child; to know that when he takes his first breath, \$20,000 he'll have straddled to his back.

It is so important that we take the steps to stop the loss of revenue today, and that is why I'll be voting in favour of this bill, in support of the Living Within Our Means Act. I thank the member for bringing it forward, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

1510

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to speak to Bill 26, the Living Within Our Means Act. I know what this is about, and so does the member from Cambridge, and all the other Tory members. This isn't about the debate here. Nobody watches this debate except a couple of people in the stands here and a couple of good people who watch this channel because they like a few of us and they want to hear what we've got to say. But the majority of people don't have a clue what we say.

This is about a few nice Tory bills that you take out to the public in Cambridge or Durham or some other rural community, and then you take this bill and you say, "We tried to pass this modest bill, the Living Within Our Means Act, and you know what? New Democrats opposed it. Can you believe it? And you know what? Liberals opposed a very simple bill that says it makes it illegal for a government to run a deficit, except in extraordinary circumstances. Don't you agree?" And people say, "Yeah, of course we agree," because it makes sense.

It's a simple bill. I get it. I understand the politics of this. All I want to say to the member of Cambridge—because I like a lot of Tory members, I have to admit. I don't like the politics, but I like a lot of you guys. I have to say that this is a throwback to a Harris agenda that I don't believe is creative. You young'uns are the ones

who should be bringing some creativity, because you can't rely on the old ones who are here. You can't do that, with all due respect, because I'm there. A lot of the old ones bring that Harris baggage. You've got to get it off. Just shed it, throw it off, but don't go back to the same stuff that people heard 15 or 20 years ago. You've got to be fresh, and none of you are fresh with your ideas. You're going back to your old base, and you've got to understand, member from Cambridge, your base is not enough to form government. That's why I'm urging you—I'm doing it for your own good; I'm trying to help. I am saying to you, bring something out that's creative. And I don't know what that could be from a Conservative point of view. I don't know. Because the old Progressive Conservatives knew exactly what they had to do, the old ones. Remember Davis and all the gang of the past? You guys were good at understanding—the old guys were good at understanding—you make change progressively and ever so slowly, but make change.

But you young'uns now picked up the bad habits of the Reform Party and the Harris regime, and it's not helping you. Remember, Reagan left a huge deficit. These are your buddies—Republicans, but your buddies. Bush, both young and old, left huge deficits—huge. They devastated America, and the world, for that matter. And then you've got Thatcher, another good old buddy of yours from the other part of the world, and not so far away you had Mulroney. God bless. He left a \$50-billion deficit, too. And not so far away was the Harris regime, the very ones who brought forth the Taxpayer Protection Act, you'll recall. How could you have a great economy for eight long, painful years—because it was a good economy—and leave a deficit of \$5 billion? How do Tories do that? I don't get it. I just don't get it.

This bill—I understand the politics of it. It's good for your base. God bless. But it's just not going to go anywhere.

I'd love to say more about tax loopholes and going after corporations, but I'm going to leave that to my other friend who needs to have three minutes on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. John Milloy: It's a great honour for me to speak on this bill this afternoon. I must say, I'm a little bit challenged following my friend the member from Trinity-Spadina, because a number of the comments that he made were ones that I was planning to say. But as the old saying goes, everything that needs to be said may have been said, but it hasn't been said by me. So let me just repeat a couple of the things he said about this bill.

When I looked at it, the first thing that struck me was that it's gimmicks, it's about the type of Tea Party politics that we see in the United States, our neighbours to the south, and it's not about really what's at the core. You know what, Mr. Speaker? I want to put just a few things on the table here, on the record for all of us to consider.

The first is—and you can quote me, folks—every party of this House is concerned about the deficit and the

debt that's facing this province. I actually believe that—every single party. I also believe—and actually, it's not a belief; it's a fact—that every party of this Legislature, when they have been in government, has run deficits. In fact, in 2003, when we came in, despite the assertions made by Premier Eves at the time, we found ourselves with a \$5.6-billion deficit that had been saddled on us by the Conservatives.

The other issue is that there are situations where deficits are necessary. You just have to go to Ottawa, you have to go to any province across this country, including our province, to talk about the 2008 recession and the deficits that all governments ran in order to stimulate the economy and get us through a pretty, pretty dire circumstance here in the province of Ontario and here in the country of Canada.

We are back on track. We have seen the deficit come down over the next number of years. We have a plan in place, and what's very encouraging about that plan is that, unlike the federal government and unlike other provinces, we haven't had to recast it. We haven't had to talk about how we've had to delay things. We're on track, not only meeting our targets but most recently, as members are aware, in fact exceeding those targets with the deficit that came forward.

So where does all this leave us? This leaves us with not calm water ahead. There are some tough choices that are going to have to be made by this government. Tough choices are going to have to be made by whoever is on the government side of the House, no matter what party. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? As we prepare a budget right now, what we need is discussion. We need conversation. We need people willing to roll up their sleeves and talk about these difficult choices, talk about the types of dialogue and discussion that we have to have with the people of Ontario. And you know what? I'm going to hand it to my friends in the New Democratic Party. They've come forward with some suggestions, with some ideas for consideration, and that dialogue is going on.

But what I find most troubling is the attitude of the Conservatives. What we have seen is a leader, in the person of Mr. Hudak, who came forward several weeks ago and announced to the world that not only had he not seen the budget—the budget hadn't been drafted—that, instead of rolling up his sleeves and having that kind of dialogue, he announced that he would be voting against the budget, sight unseen.

A lot of what goes on here at Queen's Park really is, as the old expression goes, inside baseball. But that fact is something that is raised by constituents over and over again as I'm out in my community. They come to me and say, "How's it going down there? Are you guys able to work together?" And they say, "What's with the Conservatives? They're talking about voting against the budget, and they haven't even seen it. Why aren't they coming forward with their ideas? Why aren't they coming forward to the table to roll up their sleeves and sit down and try to work it through?"

Instead—and I say this with great respect to the member from Cambridge; he's a neighbour of mine just to the south of me—but instead of coming forward with the ideas, instead of coming forward and saying, "Let's have a dialogue; let's see if it can work. We're going to hold the government's feet to the fire. Our vote will depend on the type of budget that we see," he says, "We're going to vote against the budget. We don't care what's in it. We don't want to be part of that process." And at the same time, "The best we can offer are some Tea Party gimmicks from the United States," the kind of stuff, as my friend from Trinity-Spadina pointed out, that was all popular back when Mr. Harris was here. And we know—we've heard some of the statistics—that on the one hand he was talking about all this fiscal responsibility and at the same time running huge deficits, and as we came into power in 2003, seeing those deficits come to life through a surprise \$5.6 billion that we encountered.

These are serious times. There are going to have to be tough decisions that are made by all parties as we move forward. We're going to need a partnership with the people of Ontario. We need dialogue. When I talk to constituents, they're telling me, "Roll up your sleeves and get to work down at Queen's Park to make sure that we can get the fiscal house in order and to make sure that the economy continues to move." We don't need gimmicks. We don't need silly bills like this. We need co-operation, and we need an opposition party that's willing to come to the table and not say, "Sight unseen, we're going to vote against your government."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: One thing I would agree on with the government House leader is, these are serious times, and we are looking at it very, very seriously.

If you talk about being reasonable, being responsible, being accountable, I'll remind you that the debt when your government came into power in 2003 was \$125 billion, and today, just 10 years later, that debt is close to \$275 billion. Now if that's accountability and that's responsibility, then I'm befuddled as to what you are really trying to accomplish through your government when you talk about responsibility.

1520

First of all, I'm pleased to rise in this House today to speak to Bill 26, Living Within Our Means, something this government has not been doing for the last 10 years. And again, I want to respectfully thank my colleague from Cambridge for introducing this very timely bill. Speaker, this bill aims to eliminate the deficit by 2016. If the government misses its goal, we're saying cabinet's salary should then be reduced by 25%.

Let's talk about consistency. That's one thing this government right now has been: extremely consistent in missing its goals over the last 10 years. Revenue is down, and spending is up and continues to climb. Households know what it means to balance books. So I ask, how can this Liberal government, with a straight face, ask its citizens to tighten their belts and live on less money

while they completely ignore their own advice? Government should lead by example when it comes to fiscal responsibility. But this Liberal government is more about “do as I say, not as I do.”

If a person loses income, they don't keep on spending. They sit down, they look at their budget and they make hard choices. You do it with the future in mind. You don't put it all on a credit card and make minimum payments. If you do, your credit card score is going to plummet, just like Ontario has faced three credit downgrades since 2009, under this Liberal government.

Not only are we about to run out of money; we're also about to run out of time. That's why this bill is so important. We've got to tackle the deficit sooner rather than later. The government may say, “What difference does a year make?” Well, in a single year, we spend roughly \$10 billion in interest on our debt; \$10 billion is essentially thrown down the drain.

What could that much money mean to a riding like Chatham-Kent-Essex or any of the other 106 ridings in this province? We face massive shortages of doctors in my riding. We could use some of that money to attract more doctors. We have a serious lack of funding for hip and knee replacements. There are people in my riding who are in constant pain waiting for these surgeries. That would be a much better use of funds than tossing money down the drain on ongoing debt payments.

These are just some of the reasons that I stand strong in support of my colleague from Cambridge and Bill 26. And that's why, again, I believe we need to unite and support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, we're not going to unite and support this bill. I don't want to disappoint you, but I will.

Listen, we've seen this whole thing before. I remember Tim Hudak and a number of members who are currently in the Legislature today, who sat there in the time of Harris. He came in with great fanfare and introduced exactly the same bill. He said, “Why are we doing that? Because we want to be fair to the taxpayer.” In fact, I think they called it the Taxpayer Protection Act. And then they said, “Never will there be a deficit, and if there is, we're going to cut back the salaries of cabinet ministers.”

Well, the minute they got in any trouble, what did this government do? It ran to the Legislature, introduced legislation and overrode the provisions of their own bill. My God, Mr. Speaker, they were saying one thing to the voters, but when it came to affecting their pay, because they had done things that didn't deal with balancing the budget, they ran into this Legislature. They overrode their own legislation on at least two occasions that I can remember. So I find this a little bit much.

I find it a little bit much that they stand here and say, “This is the only way we're going to ensure that people balance budgets.” That's not how you balance a budget. I thought the speech given by the member from Kenora—

Rainy River hit it on the head: Balancing a budget is a serious piece of work. It's something that we have to take seriously. It's something that all the parties in this House have committed to; we want to balance the budget by 2017-18.

I think the difference of the political parties is how you get there. We, as New Democrats, are saying there has to be a balanced approach, and it's about doing a couple of things. It's about saying, one, let's make sure that what we've got, we manage well. We're spending money in the province on health care, education, roads and many other essential services, and we need to make sure that the dollars we spend are spent in a way that respects the ability to pay.

The other thing we've got to do is that we have to take a look at how we grow this economy. It's not a question of raising taxes every time you have a problem. You've got to grow the economy. For example, I talked earlier today about how there's a great opportunity to develop a stainless steel industry here in Ontario from the potential of the Ring of Fire that will not only give jobs in northwestern and northeastern Ontario when it comes to mining, but it will also create great opportunities when it comes to the development of manufacturing jobs and everything in between when it comes to the development of stainless steel.

Then we've got to take a look at our tax regime. You know that our party and Andrea Horwath have spoken here many times about a number of tax loopholes that need to be cut in order to make sure that people are paying their fair share, make sure that we do what is best for the taxpayer at the end of the day and make sure that we balance budgets in a balanced and responsible way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a pleasure to get up and talk to this bill from my colleague from Cambridge. He raises a lot of good points about having to pay your way. This country is built on debt financing that looked at key investments, but this is not debt financing; this is operational costs that are borrowed year after year after year.

I can't help but go back when I hear the House leader talk about the 2003-04 budget under Harris. I was a newly elected mayor; I'd been a councillor for a number of years before that out in South Glengarry. When we got there and this government spent \$3 billion of that deficit in the last week of March—\$1.5 billion to the city of Toronto and \$1.5 billion to the rest of the province, in two weeks. I remember the honourable MPP from our region, Jim Brownell, saying he was so busy delivering the cheques that he couldn't do it all in the last week of March. The money would flow, though; it would belong to that year's budget. Then, through some accounting changes, they manufactured that debt.

This is a government, right from the start, whose idea was to deceive the people out there. Stand up and do what's right. That's just what I saw. When we look at some of the results they have here—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order?

Hon. Jeff Leal: The member used the term “deceive.” I’m not sure that that’s parliamentary, so I’ll ask your ruling on that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Withdrawn.

So, when looking at some of the great points that you raised here—you talked about the debt-to-GDP, which this government has doubled. There was a Maclean’s magazine article just a couple of weeks ago that really painted a much worse story than that. They talked about us comparing Ontario to Greece, France—the countries in Europe that we’re talking about. They’re talking about a national debt. When you add in Canada’s debt, the WSIB debt of \$19.5 billion—we’re talking about unfunded liabilities—it put our debt up with Greece, painting a much more different story than when you consider Ontario by itself, because, really, we have to look at the country when you add in those debts.

The good news for us, I guess—the reason we haven’t had further downgrades—was that outside lending authorities are counting on the federal government to bail us out. They also put us as the first province that is likely to default on our debt. These are not great things; we should be trying to attract business. We have to get out of the way of business and let them function, let them hire people and give good-paying jobs; this government has done everything but.

I’ll give the remaining time to my colleague to speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Rod Jackson: It’s a real honour to rise here and speak to my colleague from Cambridge’s Bill 26, An Act to enact the Balanced Budget Act. I really do find it pretty astounding, the level of resistance to it. That really speaks to the crux of the problem that we have here in Ontario, with a massive debt and deficit that’s better than double of all the provinces put together.

There has been no bill that the government has put forward since this new session that has even begun to try to address this. The fact that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs actually stood up not a couple of minutes ago and read the majority of the bill out here in the House only to make the point that he didn’t understand it—does it drive home the point that we’re trying to tell you? You don’t get it. You don’t understand what’s wrong.

We have a debt and a deficit that need to be taken care of, need bold action and need somebody—thank God we have the member from Cambridge, who has the capacity to actually write a bill that will actually make a change and help reduce the deficit and debt in the province of Ontario, so that our children don’t have to pay for it, so that my two young children don’t have to pay it, so his two young children and future children don’t have to pay for it.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My grandkids.

1530

Mr. Rod Jackson: Grandkids. This is ridiculous. This is an action—maybe you’re afraid because it’ll hold you, as a cabinet minister, accountable for not being able to balance your own budget. Is that what you’re afraid of? I don’t know, but certainly it’s time for us to take this seriously. If you can’t see that this is an attempt to make a serious, real try in making sure that debt and deficits get wiped out and that people understand in the province that the government is here for them and that, “Hey, if we don’t get the job done, I’ll take a hit.” Do you know what? If something different happened 10 years ago, let’s get over that. We’ve got to move forward together. Do you remember that? Let’s do that for a change. Let’s move forward, work together, get the job done, eliminate the debt and deficit.

Let’s hear what you guys have a plan for. Let’s hear your plan to do that—a real plan, not a fake one, not your window dressing stuff; a real one. You guys: I’m waiting for your plan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Cambridge, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don’t think two minutes will do justice on what the reply would entail. I will say that I want to thank—sincerely thank, actually—the members from Kenora–Rainy River; Kitchener–Conestoga; Trinity–Spadina; Chatham–Kent–Essex; Timmins–James Bay; Barrie; my good-old seatmate, the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry; and also the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the government House leader, for their comments on this bill.

I don’t know how I can express what I’m feeling right now, because this bill is about trying to assure the people of the province of Ontario that we finally understand the gravity of our fiscal and jobs crisis. They talk about the fact that this bill doesn’t do any harm and is inconsequential. Well, if that’s the case, at the very least, pass this bill and finally tell the people of Ontario that we’re prepared to roll up our sleeves and get the job done of fixing our fiscal and jobs crisis. Clearly, what I’m hearing today from the other two parties and their caucuses is that they’re not prepared to do that.

I do take exception to what the government House leader has said in terms of his commentary and his narrative on the budget. If we’ve learned anything today it’s the fact that the Liberal and NDP caucuses have actually rejected our bills sight unseen. Other than the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, who joked about the kind of legalese—and he’s a lawyer—about what’s written in that bill. We actually have to spell out what a deficit is because this government really doesn’t understand what a deficit is. If he can’t handle that, I’m sure, as a cabinet minister, he’s going to work really, really hard to figure out when revenues exceed expenditures. It’s really the mathematics that we’re looking at here. I thought that was a totally ridiculous contribution to this debate, and he should apologize to the people of Ontario for it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We’ll take a vote on this at the end of regular business.

ELECTRONIC COMMERCE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE COMMERCE ÉLECTRONIQUE

Mr. Smith moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 28, An Act to amend the Electronic Commerce Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 28, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur le commerce électronique.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to stand here in the House today and debate—oh, this is the second reading of the Electronic Commerce Amendment Act, and I move that we have second reading of that bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Now you can debate it.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you for your lead on that, Mr. Speaker.

It really is an honour to stand here and speak to Bill 28, the Electronic Commerce Amendment Act. It's something that's long overdue in the province of Ontario. As a matter of fact, it has been introduced already in many jurisdictions in the world and many right here in North America and in Canada as well.

I'm also extremely pleased to recognize a number of members of the Ontario Real Estate Association who are here from the greater Toronto area, and many that have been here over the last couple of weeks as well to support this bill, which just makes a lot of sense.

This bill is really a testament to a lot of good political work—some good political footwork that has been happening on the ground here. The real estate association and the realtors across the province have met with me several times, including here at Queen's Park and at my office in Belleville as well—members of the Quinte real estate association. I recall, about 16 months ago, meeting with Doug Peterson, who is a well-known realtor and a former president of the Quinte and district real estate board back in the Belleville area. He goes by @realtordoug1 on Twitter, and he's probably following here this afternoon.

Sharon Shortt, from the Quinte and District Real Estate Association, was here as well just a couple of weeks ago when this bill was introduced at first reading. She's a member of the PAC for the Ontario Real Estate Association as well. They've been doing a lot of good work and explaining to us what it's going to mean to them for us to remove this bit of red tape that's interfering with business.

I would also like to thank a very well-respected member of the Liberal Party, Yasir Naqvi—he's now the Minister of Labour—who was a co-sponsor the first time I introduced this bill in the Legislature in the last session before prorogation. I spoke with the Minister of Labour earlier this morning, and he assured me that despite the fact he won't be here today, he's still 100% behind this

bill. The realtors in the Ottawa area, in our nation's capital, are very much looking forward to this bill being passed today. He assured me that he's spoken with the member from Peterborough and all the other caucus members on the government side and in cabinet, and he's very confident that they are going to have this bill passed and send it to committee later today. So I look forward to your support on one of our three bills here today, anyway.

Ontario just simply can't operate at a competitive disadvantage any longer. When it comes to the use of electronic signatures, that's exactly what we've been doing here in Ontario. It's time to move into the 21st century.

We in Ontario are competing with Alberta and competing with British Columbia for skilled workers and new Canadians. Whether we'd like to believe it or not, how easily we are able to complete real estate transactions in this province is a factor when people are looking to buy new homes and locate here. We can change that today by passing this bill.

Thirteen years ago, when a PC government actually first brought in the Electronic Commerce Act, we were at the dawn of the digital age. We had e-commerce laws that were relevant in the era of the beeper. You may have had a beeper back then, Mr. Speaker—I'm not sure—but we've moved from the beeper. No one carries one of those anymore.

Few people would have conceived of the advent of the app or the ability of a real estate agent to go a whole day fielding offers and exchanging emails with other agents without ever even going into their office to do their business, but that's where we are right now in Ontario. Ontario's real estate sector entered that world years ago, but they've been saddled with electronic commerce laws that just haven't kept up. The age of the beeper has been pushed aside and we're now in the age, of course, of the BlackBerry, the iPod and the iPad.

Now, there were some legitimate concerns raised at the time about being able to make electronic signatures secure here in Ontario. I recall being in the newsroom at Quinte Broadcasting as the news director there. It seemed like we were often reporting—this was back in the early 2000s—about a new computer virus that had taken over a computer. But secure technology, which seemed to be a pipe dream back then for even email, much less real estate transactions—is simply not the case anymore. We've evolved. Things are secure. So many of the things we do are done online and with secure signatures.

Software now exists that can ensure the security of every electronic signature; in many cases, making them more secure than the signatures we currently use to make real estate transactions in person. Electronic signature software now has the ability to perform several functions that ensure safe and secure transmission of our information. The software now exists to allow individuals to sign or initial documents when it's appropriate to do so.

Software can also authenticate users so that different users have different abilities and access to different

functions and information when signing documents electronically. Safeguards are in place that time-stamp every action on a document so a user can track when an edit or signature was added to the document. Technology that powers the real estate sector in this province is leaps and bounds ahead of where it was when we first drafted our e-commerce laws here in Ontario.

In addition to the security features that I have already listed, many programs now also encrypt documents and flag any changes made by users since their last log-in, so that anyone with access to the document is able to see what change was made and actually see who made that change as well.

The security for these systems is this high for a reason, Mr. Speaker. Purchasing a home is a huge milestone in a person's life. It remains one of the key moments in their life. It it's an accomplishment for many people to ever be able to move their family into their first home. It certainly was for me when I moved into 82 Prince of Wales Drive in Belleville with my wife.

This is part of the experience we should rightly be trying to protect for homebuyers, and that's why I know that the real estate sector is incredibly supportive of ensuring that the move to electronic signatures is made in the safest and most secure way possible.

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The reason that we have to do this, Mr. Speaker, is because the world is leaving us behind. As I mentioned off the top, 30 European countries now allow the use of electronic signatures on real estate deals—that's 30 European countries. Most of the provinces in Canada allow this as well. Many passed legislation similar to Ontario's more than a decade ago, but, either through amendment or regulation, have followed up with the changes necessary since then. Many states in the United States have likewise made the transition from paper-based real estate transactions to electronic signatures.

Just think of how much easier it's going to be to complete a real estate transaction by making this amendment to the act today. We're not reinventing the wheel. As a matter of fact, in this, as in many things, sadly, Ontario is simply trailing the pack.

Over the last few years, housing has kept Ontario's economy afloat. New housing construction and the buying and selling of homes are responsible for the fact that this province isn't deeper underwater than it currently is. Those sectors have buoyed what a terrible economy we have here in Ontario right now. The industry has received little thanks from this government over the years. As a matter of fact, the real estate sector had to wait years for Ontario to catch up to most of the rest of North America and Europe when it comes to this simple electronic signature ability. Their partners in the home-building sector, as well, have been forced to fight numerous impediments from this government like the new trades tax that's going to make it much harder for builders and contractors to do business here in Ontario.

The Ontario economy right now is a body operating with one good lung, and the Ontario government seems

to be smoking about a pack a day or so and not making it better. I can tell you, as the red tape critic and the small business critic for the PC Party, red tape is strangling business in this province right now, and that's a sentiment that seems to get lost in this building. Red tape strangles business. This is one simple way, by allowing realtors this ability, to start to move the economy forward faster.

Many of our realtors in this province are small business people. In fact, as the Ontario Real Estate Association likes to point out to me, the smallest real estate board in the province is actually in my riding, up at the north end in beautiful cottage country. It's the Bancroft and District Real Estate Board. Many of us in this House know that our realtors are small business people. In my riding, we have small brokerages in Picton and Marmora with a ReMax. We have a very large office with Royal LePage in Belleville.

Every one of those agents and brokers go out there every day to put their client into their next dream home. Like any other small business person, they're trying to put food on their family table as well. The real estate sector is highly competitive. In such a highly competitive atmosphere, real estate agents and brokers need every chance possible to succeed, and that means that they have to be able to access documents for one client while they're in their car trying to show a house for another one.

There are currently 386,000 pieces of regulation here in Ontario. There are over 600 government agencies, boards and commissions. Even by the standard of over-regulated jurisdictions, Ontario is an overregulated jurisdiction. What we have in Ontario is a government that believes in a culture of regulation and overregulation. We've got agencies with regulatory authority that may be responsible to ministers they don't have to consult with before introducing new regulations.

We have more than just tens of thousands of regulations, though; we have hundreds of thousands of regulatory rules that are attached to individual regulation. That adds layer upon layer of red tape to the everyday duties of small business people here in Ontario. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimates that the average small business owner spends between eight and 10 hours a week dealing with regulations and red tape. That's more than one business day.

We were having lunch today with some of the realtors, and they were talking about the red tape that they're having to deal with, filling out these government documents. This bill is just a necessary first step in cutting some of that red tape.

If we start relying on private member's bills like this one to cut through the red tape in the province, it's going to be years upon years upon years before we have the overregulation problem under control. What we need in Ontario is a government that understands the needs of small business. We need a government that understands the reality that small business owners and operators, like our realtors, face when they walk out their front door

every morning to try and sell somebody their dream home.

Changing a bill is a good first step, but what we really need is a complete culture change here in Ontario when it comes to red tape.

In closing, I would like to ask all members of the House, regardless of party, of course, to support this bill today. It just makes a lot of sense. It's a sensible solution for a problem that we're facing in the real estate sector in the province. Again, Mr. Naqvi is 100% behind moving this bill to committee and making it law. It's going to update Ontario's electronic commerce laws. It's going to allow us to keep pace with the 30 European countries, it's going to allow us to keep pace with the other provinces and it's going to allow us to keep pace with the United States, which already have this ability.

I'd like to take this opportunity just to welcome a couple of people here. We've got Cynthia Lee, Henry David, John-Mark Roberts and Nita Kang representing the Toronto real estate sector; Maria Roque, who is here from Thornhill; Thomas Letour, representing the Mississauga real estate sector. Matthew Thornton and Yuliya Khraplyva are here as well from OREA, and I thank them for their support. Hopefully, we'll all do the right thing to make their lives a lot easier.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour to stand in support of the bill from the member from Prince Edward-Hastings. It's also an honour to talk about small business, quite frankly, in this chamber. It's very, very rare that we do.

I point out to those who are watching and those who are our guests here that there actually used to be a minister responsible for small business and that that cabinet post has been eliminated. I think that shows you the focus of this government, because, quite frankly, small business really has very little in common with big business. It really doesn't.

I come from a family of entrepreneurs. My son owns a successful coffee shop not far from our house, I owned my own business at one point, and our problems are not the problems of the Walmarts, not the problems of the big insurance companies. In fact, we're in contrast—distinction to the problems of banks—banks usually are our problems. And nobody addresses small business, so, again, it's a welcome change.

We need to do more for small business, just generally. I love real estate personally. I'm one of those people who doesn't play solitaire when I want to waste some time on the computer. I go through MLS listings; I'm not alone, I know. I'm like most Ontarians: My equity is tied up in my house, in the bricks and mortar of my house. That's my major investment, so of course I keep tabs on it. The only time I've actually lost money investing was not in real estate but in the stock market, and I probably share that with most Ontarians.

I know my real estate agents, and my real estate agents know me. In fact, in some ways our jobs are similar.

We're the people who know the communities, we're the people who talk to our constituents, we're the people who listen to our constituents about what our constituents need and try to respond to them.

A very clear fact that we need to get across: 90% of all jobs in the province are created not by big business but by small business. We are the job creators, you are the job creators, and anything and everything we can do to help you is what we should be doing. Again, that fact gets overlooked by this chamber.

I want to tell you that the New Democratic Party has an excellent track record. We had the lowest small business tax rate of any of the parties. We put it forward. The Liberals kind of met us halfway—they didn't come as low as we did. But, again, it's because we recognize that Walmart, that the mall is not Main Street. We are the party of Main Street, and Main Street, as we know, in our smaller municipalities and in our bigger municipalities, is suffering. We need to do everything we can to help Main Street.

The mall, the big business, it looks after itself. We should be taxing them more, and that's what we've said in the New Democratic Party, closing up those large corporate tax loopholes and steering that money where it creates jobs, not giving it to them and hoping it will trickle down, but making sure a small business profits so that they can actually create the jobs that then produce more jobs in the future. That's the focus, and that I see, quite frankly, lacking across the aisle. I don't see that focus on small business and really the incredibly important role it plays in our economy.

You heard the member speak, of course, about electronic signatures, which is what this bill is about, and I want to come back to it. This is a no-brainer. Of course, we're going to support it. I expect we all will support it. We should have done this years ago. I'm just in the process of renegotiating my mortgage, talking about real estate—very good timing, I might add. By the way, talking about renegotiating my mortgage—great rate. I wonder a little bit, as the federal budget comes down, what the cousins of the party to the right are going to do about that, because I don't see how real estate, small business and/or consumers are going to be helped by higher interest rates on mortgages. I don't get it. But maybe in some of their time, our friends to the right in the Conservative Party can talk about that, because that's something that their federal cousins are looking at. We don't think it's going to be very profitable for those who are buying real estate, or those who are selling it either.

1550

At any rate, there are many, many pages of documents when you're dealing with a mortgage, as we all know—many pages of documents. It's a pain. I don't have a fax machine at home; many people don't have fax machines at home. An electronic signature would make it that much easier to transact business. I might say—and of course, this is why bills should go to committee and be discussed—I would want to look at some other venues of business too where electronic signatures should be put

into place as well. I'm going to leave a few minutes for my colleague here from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, who's a lawyer, and he's going to talk about those, I hope, because I think that electronic signatures actually could be useful in other venues as well as real estate. But this is a start. We've got to do it; get it to committee. Maybe we can broaden the scope of the bill and make it useful in other venues as well.

Small business: 30 European countries have this. It's a no-brainer. Let's do it. It's kind of sad it even has to come to the floor of the House, actually. It's almost a regulatory thing that we would hope the government would have done.

Let's talk about small business. I'm just going to take another couple of minutes because it's such a rare opportunity. Again, I thank the member for focusing on it. It's very rare. I would beseech the government: Half of your members are in cabinet now; why doesn't one of them have the dedicated task and responsibility of focusing on the well-being and the health of our small business that creates 90% of the jobs in the province of Ontario? That should be the dedicated responsibility of someone; that is an incredibly important role. How do we help small business? Back in the day, we used to give grants, start-up grants—not even loans but grants—to good entrepreneurs who had good entrepreneurial ideas. We used to give them money to help them out because we knew we'd see that money back in taxes; we'd see that money back. But nothing like that is on the horizon.

I know my son—my daughter, too—started a small business. My son started it with his own money; he saved up his own money. As a young person coming out of college—because there are no jobs for college graduates; we've heard about that a lot in this chamber. I guess, as an aside, it breeds entrepreneurs. Coming from an entrepreneurial family, he started his own business, borrowed money, paying it back, managing to pay the rent, feed himself and hire many employees to help run that business. It's a success, touch wood, but again, where's the help? There's no help from the government whatsoever—no help at all. In fact, his tax rate is going up, up, up, both municipally, provincially and federally. It's not looking good; it's hard. And, as you heard the member say, he spends a lot of his time filling in forms, sending off forms.

This is not what he should be doing. What he should be doing is what his business does best—Capital Espresso on Queen Street, by the way, if you ever drop in—making the best espresso in Toronto. That's what he should be doing. He shouldn't be filling out forms or having to have one of his employees fill out forms for hours a week. That's not what he should be doing.

Again, I ring with the member and I wonder why, on that side of the aisle, we can't put a little bit more emphasis on helping. These are our young people. These are the lifeblood of our communities. This is what makes our small towns to our big cities vibrant. It's not the big business; it's the small business.

I'm going to stop with that. We're going to support the bill. We think it's good. It will be fun to talk about it at

committee, and it's always fun to talk about small business. Hats off to our real estate agents, who are responsible for most of the equity in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Innovation and Research.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Research and innovation, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to stand in this House today to speak to Bill 28, An Act to amend the Electronic Commerce Act, 2000. I would like to thank the member from Prince Edward-Hastings, Mr. Smith, for introducing this private member's bill.

As Minister of Research and Innovation, I understand and respect the importance and responsibility this House has to keep our legislation in step with technological advancement and innovation. In fact, our new government, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, has proposed the deletion of the exception from the Electronic Commerce Act as part of its proposals for a 2012 Open for Business bill.

The Electronic Commerce Act, 2000, sets a standard for the legal use of electronic communication in most areas of Ontario law. This act removes barriers to the legally effective use of electronic communications. It aims in particular to remove barriers that arise from the use of language in statutes and regulations that were created before e-communications became widespread. Provisions like a requirement that the document be in writing or signed or in original form could raise questions of whether an electronic document could be valid. Questions also arose whether contracts could be made electronically, especially by automated means.

The act implements in Ontario the Uniform Electronic Commerce Act adopted by the Uniform Law Conference of Canada in 1999 and now enacted in all the common-law jurisdictions of Canada.

The Ontario act provides that where the law requires a signature, an electronic signature satisfies that requirement. While the 2000 act resolved the issue, the act, however, does not require anyone to use or accept electronic documents.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to go into some detail for this House about the kind of exemptions addressed in this bill.

The Electronic Commerce Act, 2000, does not apply to certain kinds of transactions or documents. It does not apply to transactions for the transfer of interest in land where transactions require registration. An example includes sale and leases for more than three years. Clause 31(d) of the act excludes "documents, including agreements of purchase and sale, which create or transfer interests in land and require registration to be effective against third parties."

The Ontario government, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, has proposed the deletion of the exception from the Electronic Commerce Act as part of its proposals for a 2012 Open for Business bill. We are very supportive of this idea. Since 2000, Ontario's electronic land registration system has been extended across

the province. Mr. Speaker, people are comfortable dealing with electronic documents. Ontario's Land Registration Reform Act says that an electronic document that conveys an interest in land does not have to be in writing or signed. In this context, the present amendment repeals the exclusion of land transactions from the Electronic Commerce Act.

The validity of an electronic document is clarified. The rules of the act about time and place of sending and receipt would apply as well.

This amendment will not affect the Teranet-based electronic land registration system, which has a separate legislative framework.

The present amendment also provides for greater certainty that the act applies to electronic information and documents whenever they were created, before or after the act comes into force. This is the same rule that has always applied to other documents under the act. Well-accepted rules of the e-commerce act will now apply to land transfers, allowing the real estate industry to modernize its transactions.

Mr. Speaker, there is a great benefit to using electronic documents. They are easier and cheaper to access, to store and to manage than paper documents. Also, electronic agreements of purchase and sale improve transaction efficiencies and reduce the time required to complete the deal. Real estate clients will also benefit from electronic documents, as they will be able to file documents electronically.

1600

While I support the spirit of this bill, An Act to amend the Electronic Commerce Act, 2000, there are a few drafting concerns related to the bill that can be debated about during committee. As Minister of Research and Innovation, I understand and respect the importance and the great gains that can be made with technological advancement and innovation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: For too long, Ontario's electronic commerce laws have been allowed to languish behind the evolving technology trends in our society. That's why I'm proud to stand in the Legislature today to support Bill 28, the Electronic Commerce Amendment Act, as introduced by my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings.

This act, if passed, would bring electronic commerce laws out of the Stone Age and into the age of the BlackBerry and the tablet. We need to update those laws and, as the MPP for Nipissing, I'm proud to be part of the team that's working to lower red tape burden on hard-working realtors.

Many of the realtors that I talk to often spend hours at a time outside of their office, taking clients to showings, attending open houses and networking to build their business and their brand in their local community. As a result, they're often forced to contend with the need for hard-copy signatures on real estate sale and other transfer documents.

I know that I don't need to tell the real estate industry, especially those here today, that Ontario has been experiencing some tough economic times as of late. As Ontarians become increasingly conscious of their household debt and the ever-increasing red tape burden imposed on the construction industry by this government, new home construction has slowed and, as a result, realtors are starting to feel the pinch.

Making this change to allow them to do their jobs more efficiently and in a timely manner can only help commerce and, as a result, our overall economy of the province. I'm proud to say that members of our caucus are working to lower red tape burden on small business owners in this province.

Today, we're putting forward one example of our commitment to further cutting red tape by introducing the Electronic Commerce Amendment Act. By passing this legislation through second reading today, together we can take a step toward turning around the economy of this province and giving our real estate sector a much-needed boost at the same time. That's why I urge members of all parties to stand with us and support Bill 28 when we vote on this later this afternoon, and I would like to once again congratulate the member from Prince Edward-Hastings on this very innovative bill that he has crafted. I congratulate him for doing that and look for their support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's a pleasure to rise and to add my voice to the discussion. When reviewing Bill 28, I had an opportunity to meet with some realtors as well on this matter. We spoke, and I heard their issues first-hand. The Brampton Real Estate Board addressed their issues and addressed the fact that many other jurisdictions already have this provision, where they can provide for electronic signatures. So, of course, we will be supporting this bill.

This bill makes sense. It's moving with the times, and it is an example of a bill, again, that addresses a need in our society's interest in promoting small businesses and providing them with the tools to do their business in an effective way. It's also recognizing that where sometimes we have our doubts about the benefits of technology—I'm sure many of the folks in this House sometimes wonder if the access to email and messaging and texting has actually freed up our time or made our lives more busy. But in this circumstance, there's no doubt that allowing for electronic signatures will certainly make the job of being a realtor easier, make the process of purchasing property and land simplified and more efficient. I think it just makes a lot of sense.

It also begs the question why we had to resort to a private member's bill to get to this point. I agree with the member from the Conservative Party when he indicated that certain initiatives like this shouldn't have to be brought forward in the form of a private member's bill. We'd like to see some initiative on the part of the government to enact some of these types of standard

"moving with the time" legislation without the need to bring forward a private member's bill.

I think, and I echo some of the comments of my colleague from Parkdale-High Park, that our priorities in this province should be job creation. And the reality of job creation is that small businesses are one of the major driving forces for employing people in any economy, but particularly in Ontario. We should make that a priority and have steps in place to look at the problems that small businesses face and provide ready and quick solutions to those.

Beyond just the steps and the procedures that small business have to go through, we should also look at a progressive taxation system for small businesses. I look to Manitoba and I think of the example where we have small businesses taxed at an absolutely different rate than the multi-billion dollar businesses and incorporations. I think that's a progressive and a meaningful way of looking at taxation for small businesses. I think we should employ these types of policies here in Ontario that small businesses see a 0% corporate tax rate up until \$500,000. That would be a great initiative here in Ontario as well. It's something that the NDP passed in Manitoba.

Back to this bill: I've spoken with my colleagues who are lawyers, and they also support this initiative. There are a number of other industries or areas where we can actually employ electronic signatures, and we should visit those. As my colleague from Parkdale-High Park indicated, in committee we should look at other industries or other areas where we can actually expand the electronic signature provision.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have to tell you, just before I get into this—we're getting into small business policy—I'm absolutely blown away by the interesting economics of the third party: this compulsion they have to say, "There's good business and bad business. Big business is bad business, and we should tax them a lot more and they'll take care of themselves." This is the absurdity of the 50-year-old economics of that party.

Bombardier is one of the biggest drivers of small business right now in Ontario. They demand and create for all kinds of specialized small innovation-based companies. The auto sector, which we worked to bail out and to help out, drives everything from tool and die to small businesses. Our taxes on big businesses are competitive with every other province, including Manitoba and including Alberta. If they weren't, and if we did what the third party said, those companies would very easily move. As a matter of fact, we're the largest automobile manufacturing centre right now in North America. But in their world, where profit is sometimes a bad word, I find that kind of interesting.

On electronic files: This is important to small business; it's important to large business. My friend from Prince Edward-Hastings is quite correct: This reduces the friction and cost of doing business. It creates more

security in transactions, whether they're small or large business.

Unlike the third party, we actually think there's an interdependence between small and big business; that there's an ecology in business. My dear friend from Bramalea-Gore-Malton may want to know that our small business tax rate is 4%. That's about 25% of the tax rate on large business. That's about as progressive as you can get.

The other thing that they love to do, because these small businesses, whether they're—quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, the entire real estate community depends on large business. Most real estate agents will tell you that Rogers and The Bay employ a lot of payroll for a lot of people who buy a lot of their houses. Most of the real estate agents present will tell you that they kind of like governments and parties that think that people who actually create jobs are a good thing.

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Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: God, they're getting a little testy over there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Who let that horse out of the barn?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins-James Bay, come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I am in full agreement with my friend from Prince Edward-Hastings. I think—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Does the member for Timmins-James Bay have a problem with my request for order?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's very, very important. As a matter of fact, there are some interesting tie-ins here. This government set up the Ontario Centres of Excellence. It has produced, with \$5 million, 1,300 new jobs and over 200 businesses, all by students. We have introduced apprenticeship programs that have created about 120,000 jobs for young people—mostly small businesses. We've established the Digital Media Zone and VeloCity. We've established Communtech in Kitchener-Waterloo; Communtech produces one new small business every day. There's the Innovation Factory in Hamilton, MaRS here, another one in Ottawa, another one in Thunder Bay, and they produce, almost daily, a new small business.

I don't think the party opposite even reads the budget—which they don't vote for. We know the official opposition decides on the budget before it's even produced, which I think is really creative. Maybe we should have electronic budgets that virtually disappear, because whether it was virtual or real, the party opposite wouldn't vote for it. I would hate to have a Conservative representing me as a lawyer, because they would sign something or not sign something having not read it. They will vote on a budget and they'll want security on security, but God knows, even an electronic signature wouldn't help

them on the budget, because they wouldn't sign it, because we know they're not going to read it. They don't read contracts before they decide to sign them or not, including the entire provincial budget.

I want to say one other thing—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. The member for Leeds–Grenville, come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Some of the things that I've worked on as research and innovation minister and some of the things that we've been able to do through regulation are actually a bit of a generation beyond us.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I can't even hear myself now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: You're a lucky man.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, my dear friend from Oxford.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oxford.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, Japan right now is cashless and credit card-less. We're actually moving into a world, and this is something that we should all work on together, and I don't think there's a problem—this is quite interesting, and I'm very serious about this, because I would like to work with the member opposite on this. I'm very sincere about this, all humour aside. Japan is now moving to a society where you use fingerprints, not signatures, to avoid identity theft and PIN numbers. There are countries now that actually have chips that replace our health card and our driver's licence and that. I think these are very interesting ideas that, if we explore it, could be quite positive.

The member for Timmins–James Bay, I have to give him credit; he actually reads budgets before he does it—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It is such a fun debate. Thanks to my friend from Prince Edward–Hastings for putting this forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: If I may, I would actually like to get back to debating Bill 28, An Act to amend the Electronic Commerce Act. It is an honour to rise this afternoon in support of my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings. It's not an overly complicated bill, but it is certainly an important amendment.

What this bill sets out is relatively simple. If enacted, Bill 28 would amend the Electronic Commerce Act to allow for the use of electronic signatures on real estate transactions and land transfers only. Currently, Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada that does not allow for the use of electronic signatures on real estate transactions. The reality is, the Electronic Commerce Act was initially passed over 10 years ago. While certain concerns about the security of electronic signatures might have been valid in the year 2000, much has changed since

then. During the intervening time, this technology has developed immensely, and thus the legislation regulating it needs to be updated as well.

Today, if we choose, we can do our banking online while riding the bus, or pay our bills with our smartphones or our BlackBerrys during our lunch break. So it stands to reason that in theory the use of electronic signatures for real estate transactions is not that far-fetched a concept and is worthy of consideration.

That being said, I do have some minor issues that I would like to raise and that will be raised during the committee stage.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask members that are having a discussion to please take it outside?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I think first and foremost, the use of electronic signatures for real estate transactions poses no higher risk to the consumer than the traditional face-to-face, pen-and-paper method. While I think it's a healthy and prudent exercise for us to always be reviewing and updating our legislation to maintain its relevance, I also firmly believe that we must do so cautiously and carefully. I'm sure that at the committee level, we will be able to solicit the advice of many varying groups and ensure that these concerns are addressed.

At its core, though, Bill 28 is a common-sense solution aimed at lowering the red tape burden in Ontario's real estate sector. Reducing red tape for our province's families and job creators should be an essential priority of the Ontario government. Regrettably, we do not see much of a willingness to do this on the part of the current government across the aisle. The Liberal government has not identified a single one of Dalton McGuinty's many spending items for postponement or reversal. Sometimes you wonder, Speaker, why they don't just understand that overbearing regulations and excessive taxes are hurting Ontario's economy and hindering job creators.

That's why I'd like to applaud the member for Prince Edward–Hastings for his concerted effort to reduce red tape and help Ontario's real estate succeed. I will be voting in support of Bill 28 this afternoon because it is the exact type of bill we ought to be considering more often in this chamber. Bills that reduce needless regulation, bills that reduce excessive government spending: These are the kinds of priorities that actually would help us kick-start Ontario's economy and create jobs in our province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's with great joy I rise to discuss the bill put forth by our member from Prince Edward–Hastings. This is just another example of where government has got to get out of the way and allow us to come into the 21st century.

It was interesting, because I had a meeting with Andre Menard of Royal LePage about a year ago talking about the issue of electronic signatures and how the time and the energy spent in chasing people down to get a

signature was just a waste of time, a waste of money that the consumer actually ends up paying for.

It's time we pull ahead. There's many examples, I think. When you look at being forced to use fax machines for signatures, most people don't have fax machines anymore. That was something from the early 1990s. That's been replaced with the Internet. I think it's time that we catch up to some of these things.

It's interesting to note that we're one of only two provinces not to allow the electronic signature. I think it's time that instead of being at the end of Confederation, we start being at the front end, and we start looking at some of the best practices that are used around the province. I think we don't have to reinvent anything; this has been used in many places.

I think it's time we get out and we started looking around and looking at how we can get rid of—our PC government is committed to getting rid of 33% of the red tape. We're hindering our businesses. We're driving up costs. We can't compete.

I listened to the mayor of Mississauga this morning when she talked about how government's role is not to create jobs but to create an environment that actually allows the private sector to create them. I think we have to start looking at that.

This is a government that's desperately in trouble. It has caused great hardship in this province. We lost 48,000 jobs in January out of the private sector—good-paying jobs. Just think of the revenue we've lost. Then we have to turn around and find that money elsewhere to support education, health care, things we hold dearly and need in this province.

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It's just another example of the competitive disadvantage that we're working with in this province. It's interesting that my colleague talked about the age of the beeper. I think with this government, the beeper reminds me of the truck that's backing up. I think it's time that we stopped backing up and started moving ahead, getting out of the way of these people who are trying to work, trying to do something for their children, trying to earn a living, and all we are seeing is a roadblock, something that they have to manoeuvre around, something like I heard the OPA talking about yesterday, somebody working around them.

We have to worry about the bottom line. I see that we have some competitive tax rates when it comes to corporations, but you have to worry about the bottom line. Businesses have to worry about the bottom line. Taxes are only part of it.

Look at our hydro rates. I guess this party is a leader in hydro. We're number one in North America as far as the highest hydro rates.

WSIB costs: We're number one in the country; highest rates, driven up to \$19.5 billion, by our independent business reports.

This government, in nine years, has gone from \$5 billion to \$19.5 billion of deficit.

Property taxes: Again, we're number one in the country; the highest property taxes.

Red tape: When we have a government, we're promising to get rid of the red tape.

We brought these agencies down to—what?—250 under the Harris government, and this government has driven it back over 600. No wonder we've got a lot of government jobs here, just to run these agencies that get in the way of business.

I enjoyed the comment about Japan being credit card-less. I think if this government was credit card-less, we'd be in a lot better shape. But you know, what's going to happen is the credit agencies and the banks are going to take our credit card, because we've been spending and not paying down the debt. We've just gotten out of control. I think it's time that you start to look around.

It's interesting when we hear the comment about us voting against the budget, sight unseen. I guess we're a party that likes to believe. We listened to the throne speech, and you told us that you weren't going to look after the debt and you weren't going to address the jobs crisis, so why wait? You've already told us what's in the budget. We've told you upfront: If you don't handle those two key issues, the key issues that the constituents of my riding are telling me, how could I vote for the budget? I would just be a hypocrite, because we talk about this as being key to getting Ontario back on track.

We've been running this province in the red since 2004-05, and it's time that we get responsible government, government that actually puts programs in place and that allows business to work and generate the revenue that will pay for the services that will make us competitive tomorrow.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I know many members are entering the chamber because we're getting close to the vote. I would ask you to take your seats quietly. There's at least 10 conversations going on. It was very difficult to listen to the last speaker, so I'd ask you to keep it quiet.

The member for Prince Edward-Hastings, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Todd Smith: I was very pleased. I didn't know what to expect, to be honest, when I came in here today. I didn't know which way the parties were going to go on this bill, but I'm very pleased to hear the comments from my colleagues from Nipissing and Dufferin-Caledon and Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. Thank you very much for your thoughtful comments. I appreciate as well the comments from the third party, from Parkdale-High Park and the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton—as well from the government side: the Minister of Research and Innovation and also the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

The comments from the member from Parkdale-High Park really struck me when she mentioned the fact that realtors are so important to our local communities, and small business people in general are so important in our local communities, creating 90% of the jobs in Ontario.

But the realtors are very important citizens because they're some of the most charitable philanthropists that we have in our region. I can tell you that in the Quinte region, it doesn't matter which gala dinner I'm at, I'm surrounded by real estate agents. They're there supporting the causes in our community, so I think it's great that we're able to come together here today and support them by passing this very small piece of legislation. It's a tiny thing that should have been done a long time ago.

I was also struck by the comments of the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, who gave us the illusion that this government had actually done something over the last 10 years to improve the lives of small business people in Ontario. I meet with them every day, because we're the party that actually—my leader is here—has a critic for small business and red tape because we understand how important it is to make life easier for them so that they can do the business and create the jobs in Ontario.

Thank you for your support today. We look forward to moving ahead with this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

SICK DAYS ARE FOR SICK PEOPLE ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 RÉSERVANT LES JOURNÉES DE CONGÉ DE MALADIE AUX PERSONNES MALADES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 7, standing in the name of Mr. O'Toole.

Mr. O'Toole has moved second reading of Bill 25. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a bunch of noes.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll take the vote at the end of regular business.

LIVING WITHIN OUR MEANS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉCESSITÉ DE VIVRE SELON NOS MOYENS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Leone has moved second reading of Bill 26. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll take the vote at the end of regular business.

ELECTRONIC COMMERCE AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE COMMERCE ÉLECTRONIQUE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Smith has moved second reading of Bill 28. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: I would ask that the bill go to the committee for general government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill go to the committee of general government. Agreed? Agreed.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1628 to 1633.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would all members please take their seats.

SICK DAYS ARE FOR SICK PEOPLE ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 RÉSERVANT LES JOURNÉES DE CONGÉ DE MALADIE AUX PERSONNES MALADES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. O'Toole has moved second reading of Bill 25. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	MacLeod, Lisa	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McDonell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	McKenna, Jane	Wilson, Jim
Harris, Michael	Miller, Norm	Yakubuski, John
Hillier, Randy	Milligan, Rob E.	Yurek, Jeff
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	
Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John
Bisson, Gilles	Forster, Cindy	Moridi, Reza
Campbell, Sarah	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Horwath, Andrea	Natyshak, Taras
Chan, Michael	Hoskins, Eric	Piruzza, Teresa
Chiarelli, Bob	Jaczek, Helena	Prue, Michael
Colle, Mike	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Schein, Jonah
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Singh, Jagmeet
Delaney, Bob	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Dhillon, Vic	Marchese, Rosario	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Taylor, Monique
DiNovo, Cheri	McMeekin, Ted	Vanthor, John
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Wong, Scott
Fife, Catherine	Meilleure, Madeleine	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 31; the nays are 51.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can we open the doors for 30 seconds?

LIVING WITHIN OUR MEANS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉCESSITÉ DE VIVRE SELON NOS MOYENS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Leone has moved second reading of Bill 26. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Rod

Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick

O'Toole, John
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Bisson, Gilles
Campbell, Sarah

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Gerretsen, John

Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.

Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Fife, Catherine

Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine

Natyshak, Taras
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Tabuns, Peter
Takhari, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 31; the nays are 51.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. It's the first time I've seen a bunch of guys who don't want to go home.

The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "no."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until Monday the 25th at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1641.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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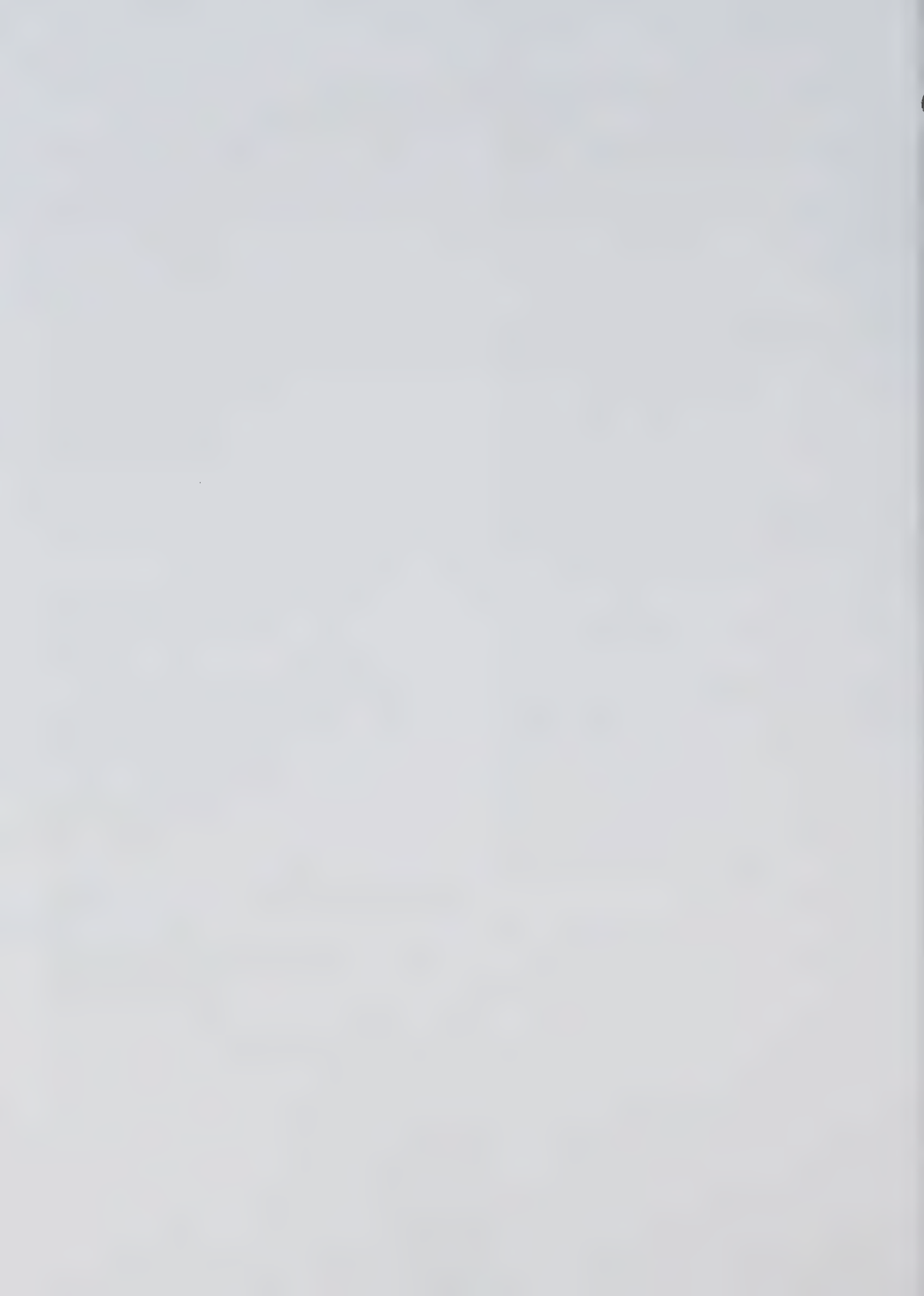
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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 25 March 2013

Lundi 25 mars 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 March 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DU QUÉBEC

Lundi 25 mars 2013

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: As a former legislative page myself, it gives me great pleasure to introduce a former page from my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and his family back to Queen's Park today. I'd like to introduce former page Case Noordermeer, his brother James, sister Nicola and the parents, David and Susan. Thank you very much and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: It's my privilege to recognize and introduce, right here, Michael Malette; his father, Remi Malette; and M.J. Bergeron. They are the parents and grandfather of our page captain today, Magalie Malette, who's busy doing a service right now.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a great, proud moment for me to introduce, in the members' east gallery today, my cousin Catherine Chornoboy and her daughter Cassandra Chornoboy, who is a student at the University of Guelph and currently the Wellington county Queen of the Furrow. Cassandra will be at the 100th anniversary of the IPM this September in beautiful Mitchell, Ontario. If I was a betting person, I'd be putting my money on Cassandra. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm a little jealous. Next time I'm going to wear my tiara.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to introduce page Fae Alexander's grandmother, Jennifer Wood, who is in the visitors' east gallery, and also her grandfather, who is here with her. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North, I would like to welcome mom Vivian Wood-Alexander, grandmother Jennifer Wood and grandfather John Wood for page Fae Alexander. Welcome and thank you.

From the member from Huron–Bruce, I understand that soon to be joining us are Val Millson and Colin Jansen, mom and brother of page Ellen Jansen. Welcome and thank you very much.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Premier, yet another abuse of taxpayers' money has been uncovered at eHealth. This time, we've learned that the

scandal-plagued agency approved thousands of dollars in expenses to pay for the chief operating officer's PhD. These expenses included tuition, books, student fees and regular flights from Toronto to Ottawa.

Premier, at a time when nearly 600,000 Ontarians are out of work, do you support this use of taxpayers' money?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question.

This of course is information that has been available for many, many months. I remember talking about this at committee, Speaker, I think it was last July.

What's important is that all expenses are reviewed and approved by the Integrity Commissioner. If, in the opinion of the Integrity Commissioner, an expense is inappropriate, those expenses are repaid, no questions asked. So it's very important—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —that the member opposite understands that all expenses are reviewed and approved.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: We only recently got those documents, Minister, because your government progressed; we didn't get those until just recently.

Premier, Ontarians expect their elected representatives to make tough choices to balance the province's books and get our economy back in gear. What they don't expect is that rogue government agencies like eHealth will sign off on thousands of dollars of expenses to give bureaucrats a free ride through university, especially when many Ontarians have had to use their own hard-earned money to upgrade their skills just to get back into the workplace.

It's time to show some real leadership here, Premier. So will you order the chief operating officer at eHealth to pay this money back today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's unfortunate that the member opposite and indeed many of his colleagues continue to refer to eHealth Ontario as a waste. I can assure you that we are getting excellent value. Ask any doctor, ask any nurse in this province, and they will talk about how eHealth is improving patient care.

Just a few months ago, I met with physicians and patients at the North York Family Health Team. I heard directly from those providers and from patients about how eHealth is transforming the way they deliver care.

So people with chronic disease like diabetes are getting much higher quality care because of these eHealth records.

Charles Lake is a patient there. He told his story about how he needed to tell his story over and over again to different physicians. Now, thanks to the good work at eHealth, he's getting excellent care in a way that works for him.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Michael Harris: I would think that telling students in Ontario that answer—most have to pay their own tuition and actually take public transit or drive to class. Only a student at eHealth actually gets on a plane to go to class.

1040

Back to the Premier: When the Minister of Health first got her job, she was given a very specific mandate to clean up the years of Liberal scandal. But after nearly four years on the job, the minister has failed at every turn. Take the \$700-million debacle at Ornge, or the more than \$2 billion spent at eHealth on nothing more than waste and mismanagement. And now we've uncovered yet another scandal over at eHealth.

In the private sector, if you spent a billion dollars and produced no results other than a company-wide scandal, you'd get fired. In the Wynne government, you actually get promoted. So, Premier, how can Ontarians have faith in your leadership when your newly appointed Deputy Premier can't even manage her own ministry?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I understand that the members opposite do not support eHealth Ontario. They want to keep patient care back in the previous century.

But let me tell you about Norma Mitchell. Norma is a senior in the province of Ontario and, like many people who show up in our emergency departments, she wouldn't always remember exactly what drug she's on, what the strength is. But thanks to eHealth Ontario, when Norma showed up at the Sunnybrook Hospital emergency department, her doctor had access to the drug profile viewer. He knew exactly what drugs she was taking. That's important information when someone comes to an emergency department. It changes the care they deliver for the better. It saves lives.

The member opposite might think eHealth is a waste. eHealth is saving lives, and the sooner he understands that, the better we'll all be.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Premier, you're fond of conversations, so let me tell you about the conversation we're having over at the justice committee. You see, over there, those people put their hand on a Bible and they swear an oath. Over here, when asked about the gas plant documents, you say, "All that has been asked for has been provided." Yet the cabinet secretary, Peter Wallace, confirmed at the committee that

we have not yet been provided with all the government documents.

You're telling us one thing here, Premier, and people swearing an oath over in committee are telling us the opposite. Can you please explain the difference between your statements here and those of sworn witnesses?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would like to respond to the member opposite by saying a couple of things.

First of all, I am very pleased that the committee is doing its work, that the committee has a broadened mandate and the committee is examining documents, is bringing witnesses forward and is hearing that testimony.

I want to just quote from Peter Wallace, who said, "I'm satisfied that the Ministry of Energy responded to the request in good faith and worked appropriately to provide the documents requested by the committee." So the secretary of cabinet seems to believe that we have provided everything that was asked for.

We're going to continue to do that. That was the whole point of opening the mandate of the committee and providing that it could ask questions about all aspects of these decisions, which I would have hoped the member opposite would have agreed with.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: In addition to the cabinet secretary swearing an oath that we don't have all the documents, we had another conversation. This time it was with Jo-Anne Butler, the vice-president of Ontario Power Authority. She also swore an oath. Under oath, she told us that the Liberal government knew full well that on top of the \$40 million in sunk costs to cancel Oakville, there would be hundreds of millions of dollars of additional necessary costs. And she said the government signed off on the document that stated that very fact on September 24. Yet one day later, on September 25, Premier, you stood in this House and told us the total cost of the Oakville relocation was \$40 million.

Can you, again, explain the difference between your statements and those of those people under oath?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The question of cost is something that is being looked into by the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature. It's also part of the mandate of the committee itself.

I can't help but comment on the first question from the honourable member about the production of documents. It was government members who went forward to the committee and offered to provide all documents on the gas plants in a much broader search than had ever been conducted before—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Thank you. Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as I said before, I thought I was going to have to phone the legislative television service because, to my shock, I watched on TV when the government made that motion and all oppos-

ition members put up their hands to oppose the production of the same sorts of documents that he's asking about today. If there's anyone that has some explaining to do, it's that member.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We've now heard, first from the province's top bureaucrat, that while you knew one thing to be true, Hansard shows you said something completely opposite. Then we heard, under oath, from the Ontario Power Authority that while you again knew one thing to be true, Hansard shows that again you said something completely different in this House.

In a recent media interview, you said, "To the best of our ability, at every ... juncture, we have given the information that we had." Premier, sworn testimony at the justice committee has proven now that is not the case.

Can you again please explain the difference between your statements in the Legislature and those of people who swore under oath in the justice committee?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I listened intently, and I didn't hear any explanation from the member as to why he and his colleagues in the opposition decided to vote against a motion put forward by the government to produce a vast range of documents.

But when it comes to costing, Mr. Speaker, let me quote from Bruce Sharp, the expert who appeared in front of the committee. This is what he had to say: "The situation begs for these numbers to be confirmed and publicized. I can think of no better provider of this service than Ontario Auditor General Jim McCarter and his staff."

Mr. Speaker, an officer of this Legislature, the Auditor General, is looking into the matter. The committee itself has the mandate to hear from witnesses. Let's let the committee and the Auditor General do their work.

As I've said before, though, I look forward to the Progressive Conservatives coming forward and explaining their opposition to the gas plant and the type of data analysis and costing that they did.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. New Democrats have identified tax loopholes worth about \$1.6 billion that can be invested in building prosperity that every Ontario family can share in. I understand the Minister of Finance has written to his federal counterpart about closing loopholes worth \$200 million, to ensure that companies earning money in Ontario pay taxes in Ontario.

Will the Premier tell Ontarians whether the government still plans to move ahead with a new loophole that lets Ontario's biggest corporations skip paying the HST when they entertain their clients?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This is one of those areas where I think we have a lot of common ground with the third party, Mr. Speaker. Corporate tax avoidance has been a priority of our government, and the Minister of

Finance has made it very clear that it's an area that we're looking at. That's why he has been in touch with the federal government. We believe that it's essential to ensuring we can provide public services like health care, education, infrastructure and roads that we make sure we do everything to provide for that revenue, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue to work, obviously, with the federal government and to make sure that they're doing what they can. We will also take responsibility to make this a priority going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In the last budget, New Democrats made sure that the deficit could be reduced ahead of schedule without making cuts that hurt families. That's what a balanced approach means, Speaker.

Will the Premier tell Ontarians whether the government plans to proceed with a tax giveaway that will cost the treasury over \$1 billion a year so Ontario's largest corporations get to write off the taxes on drinks and dinner?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What we are going to do is we're going to present a budget, Mr. Speaker, that balances fiscal responsibility and building a fairer society. That's what we have said we're going to do, and that's why I believe that there is common ground, actually, with both parties on the opposite side of the House.

It does trouble me that the Leader of the Opposition has said out of hand that he's not even going to read the budget and he's not going to support it.

1050

I think it's very responsible that the leader of the third party has said that they are willing to look for some things that we may be able to work on together. This is one of them, Mr. Speaker. That's why the Minister of Finance wrote to his counterparts in the federal government last week. That's why we are, in our own budget process, looking at where those tax compliance issues can be addressed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the letter that I saw that the Minister of Finance wrote to the federal government didn't speak about the issue that I'm speaking about today.

Last week, the finance minister said he would look at restricted input tax credits. I think the people want the government to move beyond looking at these things, Speaker. They want to move beyond that as much as they want to move beyond the conversation. People would love to see incentives that get companies hiring instead of the kind of incentive that we see now, which is an incentive for people taking people out for drinks and dinner.

In tough economic times, the government needs to make some really tough choices. Why are they choosing business expense accounts ahead of job creation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think I've already answered this question. These are issues that concern us. These are things that we are paying attention to.

The leader of the third party notes that looking at issues or having a conversation about an issue is not a worthwhile activity. I'd suggest, Mr. Speaker, that in order to make a decision that's informed, in order to be able to make a reasonable assessment of a situation, you actually have to look at the facts. You actually have to look at the complexity of the issues before us. That's what I mean when I say we're looking at these things, because it's very simple to pick out an issue and talk about it in isolation, outside of the context of the larger budget, outside of the context of the larger fiscal situation. We're not going to do that. We're not going to make knee-jerk decisions. We're not going to look at things outside of the context of all of the other issues that we have to contemplate. We're going to look at the relationship among these issues and bring forward a budget that is responsible and focuses on a fairer society and fiscal responsibility.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't know what the Liberals have been doing for the last 10 years, but I think the people want them to get down to some action.

My question is to the Premier. People in Ontario have seen the cost of living rise faster than their paycheques. The HST took a net \$350 out of the ordinary family budget. At the same time, the government wants to help big businesses pay for a night out on the town. Now the Premier is saying she's open to new taxes that would hit family budgets real hard. Does the Premier think it's fair to ask people to pay yet another sales tax while the government plans to let Ontario's largest corporations write off theirs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very glad that the leader of the third party asked this question, because the underlying premise of this question—and this is what I believe she's asserting—is that we can afford, given the current situation and given our current revenue streams, to build the transit that is needed in the GTHA and that we can afford to build the infrastructure and repair the infrastructure that's needed around this province.

I believe that that is a flawed assumption. I believe that it is not possible without new revenue streams to build the transit that's needed, and I believe if we follow the path that the leader of the third party is laying out for us, we will miss another generation of transit building in this region that will stunt the economy of this province for another generation.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This is not the time to make the comments, when I am getting quiet.

Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: How disappointing. What the Premier missed is that I was asserting that everyday families in Ontario cannot actually afford more Liberal taxes

that hurt their family budget. That's the point I'm making, Speaker.

People in Ontario are wondering why the government seems more interested in helping out their well-connected friends than they are in helping out everyday families, whether that's pushing casinos into cities that don't want them or giving Ontario's largest corporations a tax giveaway when they buy dinners and drinks.

The Premier says she's open to plans that could hit family budgets yet again. Why is the government moving ahead with a tax giveaway that could hand billions to Ontario's largest corporations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Here's what we've done to help people: the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit, the Children's Activity Tax Credit, the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, the northern Ontario energy benefit, Mr. Speaker. Each one of those initiatives has helped people with their costs.

But here's what I find disappointing and what I think we cannot afford to do, and that is to put off the building of transit. The leader of the third party has picked on one of the revenue tools, Mr. Speaker, and there is a whole range of them, but the reality is we cannot wait another generation, another 30 years, to build the transit that is needed to grow the economy of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Too bad the Liberal government took \$4 billion out of Transit City and cancelled the bus replacement program, Speaker. That's the commitment to transit in this province.

I think Ontarians want to know what the Premier's priorities are. They're being told that these are tough times. They're losing hospital services and they're losing services in schools. They just saw the HST increase the price of hydro, home heating and gasoline, and now they're being told another increase could be on the way. Meanwhile, the government has earmarked over \$1 billion annually so Ontario's largest corporations get to write off things like drinks and meals when they entertain their clients. Does the Premier think that that is a balanced approach to priorities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Unfortunately for the leader of the third party, I was the Minister of Transportation when we made those decisions around transit build in Toronto. We didn't take \$4 billion out, Mr. Speaker. We just simply slowed down the implementation. That \$4 billion is building that Eglinton crosstown line right now—\$8.4 billion.

Mr. Speaker, it is astonishing to me that the third party would not be supportive, with the Toronto member sitting in that—the Hamilton member, the people who know that we need transit, that they would take a position against a progressive transit-building strategy in this province. I don't understand where they're coming from, but I think that they should reconsider and they should be with us on this.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier. When you became Premier, you promised to be open and transparent about your government's decision to cancel power plants in vulnerable Liberal ridings. You said it was important to make sure that all the documents were made available. But last week in committee, secretary of cabinet Peter Wallace testified that the opposition has not been provided with all the government documents relating to the Mississauga and Oakville power plant cancellations.

You promised all of the documents weeks ago, but we still haven't seen them. Can we expect that there's going to be another document drop sometime before question period on Thursday? Or are you going to release it at 5 o'clock on Good Friday?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, I can just quote Secretary Wallace and what he said to the committee: "It is my belief that the Ministry of Energy acted in good faith in searching for and producing documents in their possession that they understood were responsive to the committee's request."

But again, Mr. Speaker, unless my memory is failing me, I believe that the member who asked the question was the same one who sat there with opposition members when the government came forward with a motion to produce a wide variety, across-the-board production of documents related to the gas plants from all ministries, far broader than had ever been asked for. And, to my astonishment, that very member raised his hand and voted against it, Mr. Speaker, so perhaps in the supplementary he can explain his opposition to that request.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Clearly we have different definitions about what it means to be open and transparent.

Mr. Wallace made another revelation last week. He explained how the Ministry of the Attorney General launched an investigation into serious concerns of political interference at the Ontario Power Authority that were highlighted in an email that you were aware of. But when issues were raised about document disclosure, your government failed to even disclose that the Attorney General's office was conducting an investigation.

Why was this investigation conducted in secret? Why didn't your government, at any time, given the gravity of this serious scandal, inform the public that there was an ongoing investigation into the potential cover-up and withholding of documents by political staff—not civil servants, political staff?

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member will know that Secretary Wallace provided a detailed explanation of that matter. But, you know, going back to the member's first question, he stood here and talked about the political

aspect of the decision to cancel those plants, yet he fails to talk about his own party's opposition to the plants and the fact that they made it a centrepiece of their campaign.

Perhaps it's time to remind members of the Mississauga South PC candidate robocall, one of my favourites, and a favourite over here: "Hi there. This is Geoff Janoschik, your Mississauga South Ontario PC candidate. I'm calling about the McGuinty-Sousa power plant that the Liberal government decided to build in your backyard. I am against this power plant, and as your MPP, I will fight to stop the power plant from being built. Unlike the Liberals, our team has been knocking on doors every single evening for several months"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

CASINOS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Figures released by MPAC show that many OLG casinos are worth far less today than they were at the last assessment, in 2008, and this in turn is devastating the finances of their host communities. Examples: a \$12-million drop in Sault Ste. Marie; \$40 million at Caesars Windsor, who just today, by the way, announced another 38 people laid off; and a \$173-million drop at Fallsview Casino.

MPAC blames these drops on this government's wrong-headed OLG privatization and expansion plans. Why won't this government put a moratorium on further OLG expansion plans until the people of Ontario have had their say?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There are a number of issues here. The one about people having their say: The reality is that we are not imposing casinos on municipalities. It's up to municipalities to decide whether they want a casino. It might be a very worthwhile activity for the member opposite to talk to some of his colleagues and friends on Toronto city council and have that discussion about how they are going to vote and what they're going to decide.

But the reality is that one of the key reasons that OLG is changing the business model and is renewing the business model is just that: A decade ago, our border casinos and slot facilities generated over \$800 million in annual profit. Today that number is less than \$100 million, because of the dollar, because of the tourism patterns and so on. The job of the OLG is to modernize and to move the industry along. That's what the transformation is about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: And in the meantime, the people have no say. Nearly \$260 million in value has been wiped out at five Ontario casinos, all of which were built with public dollars. And this plunge in property values hits municipalities all at once—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Transportation, come to order.

Mr. Michael Prue:—resulting in a huge year-over-year decline in municipal revenues, just like in the north. Added to this, there is mass confusion over the municipal hosting formula that results in municipalities being completely in the dark about potential casino revenues.

Why won't this government admit that its OLG privatization and expansion plans are in total shambles?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I think the member opposite—a member of the party that brought casinos and brought gambling to Ontario—understands that the industry changes. One of the realities of the industry is that the borders are not providing the same kind of revenue that they did a decade ago.

OLG is tasked with modernizing the industry; that's what they're doing. We've been very clear on two fronts: We've said very clearly that municipalities will decide whether they want to have a casino in their jurisdiction, and secondly, I made it very clear last week that the formula will be the same across the province—that there will be no special deals. I think there's actually clarity in this process, and it's up to municipalities to decide what their proposal will be.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Premier, in her capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Livestock farmers in the rural parts of my riding of Oak Ridges—Markham were severely impacted by last summer's drought. A real concern has been a shortage in forages for livestock. Farmers have been calling for deadlines of the federal-provincial AgriRecovery program to be extended. In the minister's last update to the House, she said our government was working with the federal government to extend the program, but that the conversation was still in progress.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister please provide this House with an update on the status of this extension?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you to the member for Oak Ridges—Markham for the question.

I'm pleased to have been able to have a conversation with both of my critics in the last couple of weeks on this issue and on others. I heard from farmers across Ontario who were concerned about the deadline extensions; both critics brought that forward, and I'm happy to report that we have extended both deadlines. The deadline for buying feed or moving animals under the Canada-Ontario forage and livestock transportation assistance program has been extended to June 1 and, as well, the deadline for farmers to submit their program application forms has been extended to June 14.

I had heard of these issues before I met with the critics. They reinforced the concern, and I was able to tell them that I was working on it. I knew it was important for livestock producers who faced feed shortages to have the time they needed to purchase and to ship hay for their animals. This extension is very helpful for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the minister for that response. I'm very pleased to hear that Ontario livestock farmers will be able to access this program through until June.

Farmers are also working together through a program called HayEast. This partnership has farmers from western Canada and farmers from Ontario working together on a volunteer basis to bring hay and forages to our province. In the fall, the Ontario government stepped up early, along with the federal government, to provide immediate support of up to \$500,000 and up to \$2.5 million to match donations in support of HayEast ending on February 28 of this year.

Can the minister please inform this House about the status of the HayEast program?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much for the question. I just want to take a moment to thank all of the farmers and all of the folks who have donated to the HayEast program. It really is inspiring to see the mutual support system that is in place. In 2003, Ontario farmers and suppliers helped out their western cousins, and western farmers returned the favour this year.

I also want to report to the House that the new Ontario government is providing an additional \$150,000 to HayEast this spring. It will extend the program and it will bring available out-of-province hay to farmers who need it in Ontario. Mark Wales, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, said, "This news will help ease the minds of many Ontario farmers who are still looking for hay to get their livestock through to the summer season." This is good news for farmers in Ontario.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Premier. Premier, what started as a flagrant misuse of taxpayer money by promoting eco-terrorism through a tax-funded broadcaster has now become yet another complete embarrassment for the province of Ontario. With the Premiers of Alberta and BC criticizing your Pipe Trouble as "disappointing," "offensive" and "contrary to Canada's interests," we've also heard from Canada's federal minister of heritage calling it "tasteless."

We know that your friend Dalton McGuinty has continually made derogatory comments about Alberta resource development. Premier, do you intend to continue the outright hostility towards the province of Alberta and its huge potential for job creation right here in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Education.

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Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I think it's important to know, first off, that TVO is responsible for its own editorial content. It is not appropriate for politicians to dictate editorial content.

Having said that, what we have done is raised questions with TVO in—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Liz Sandals: We have raised questions with TVO to find out how—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Lanark, too.

Hon. Liz Sandals:—the programming in question meets their educational standards, and have their fiscal standards been met?

I'm pleased to report that TVO has indicated that it is going to appoint two independent experts, and they will be looking at the game in question and report back to us. Meantime, the game has been taken off the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: On Saturday I wrote to you outlining the more than 500 Ontario-based companies engaged in Alberta resource development and the thousands of people these firms employ. I also outlined that over the next 25 years, Ontario will gain some \$63 billion in additional GDP as a result of Alberta's resource development. You will also know that in Ontario we are facing the worst jobs crisis of our lifetime and that nearly 600,000 men and women woke up this morning without a job.

Premier, are you willing to risk the future of our province and the future for these 600,000 men and women by continuing the disrespectful public comments about the resource development sector, or will you reject the past comments made by Dalton McGuinty and Minister Brad Duguid and immediately embrace Alberta's resource development for the potential of Ontario?

Hon. Liz Sandals: We have recognized the public concern on this particular issue and I want to reinforce that TVO has in fact taken the game in question down from their website and is appointing experts to report on that. I am waiting until I get that report to make any judgment about the particular game in question.

But on the larger issue, which is Ontario's support of the tech sector which serves the oil and gas sector, absolutely we understand that those are critical jobs. Ontario wants to invest in jobs and we want those people who are investing in jobs in Ontario to be part of the Canadian economy in supplying other provinces. Absolutely that is our strategy.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. Premier, for the last two weeks we have heard about the horrific story of a young girl suffering physical and sexual abuse at the hands of a person whose care she was placed into by the children's aid society. We have heard that the children's aid was aware of the abuse, yet nothing was done. I have repeatedly asked the minister to investigate and provide Ontarians with an answer as to how this could have occurred. We have not yet heard a response.

Can the Premier outline the steps her government is taking to ensure this kind of breach of protection never happens again?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Community and Social Services is going to want to speak to the supplementary.

I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to do and are doing everything we can to keep the children of this province safe. It is absolutely a first principle of ours that every ministry that works in the protection of children, whether it's Ministry of Children and Youth Services or Ministry of Education or Ministry of Community and Social Services—it is absolutely our objective to put in place the protections, to put in place the regulations, to put in place the supports and the funding that will allow children to flourish. That is our objective, Mr. Speaker, and I know the minister will speak to the details of what's happening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the Premier: Premier, your Minister of Children and Youth Services has indicated that Ombudsman oversight is not a priority to your government, yet Ontario remains the only province in Canada that does not have this kind of oversight. In spite of this fact, the Ombudsman office receives hundreds of complaints each year.

Speaker, the terrible case of this young woman who spent years being ignored by a system that is supposed to protect her makes it clear that it's time for Ombudsman oversight. Will the Premier listen, and grant the Ombudsman oversight of children's aid societies?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, over the last several years, our government has taken yeoman's steps to put in place protections for children, the children's advocate being one—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Lanark, second time.

Hon. Ted McMeekin:—some other mechanisms.

I know from speaking with my colleague the Minister of Children and Youth Services that she is reviewing the particulars of this case, with a view to attempting to ensure that the kinds of difficulties that are apparent don't repeat themselves.

I also understand that the member opposite may have a private member's bill coming up for discussion soon in the House, and I look forward to having and listening to that debate.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. This government is focused on building a strong, healthy and prosperous province. Supporting the work of our institutions and their researchers is critical to our efforts to remain competitive in this global economy and address our current-day challenges. It is through our institutions and collaboration with our partners that informed research findings and innovative solutions are possible. As we move towards a knowledge-

based economy, our success depends on our ability to lead in research and innovation.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Research and Innovation: What is this government doing to ensure that the research and innovation efforts of our institutions and their researchers are being supported?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I thank the member for that question.

Mr. Speaker, our government knows that through research and innovation, our universities, colleges, hospitals and research institutions can deliver discoveries that will lead to leading technologies.

To date, our ministry has announced and committed \$626 million through the Ontario Research Fund-Research Infrastructure program. The Research Infrastructure program supports the modernization, development and purchase of new research infrastructure for our universities and research institutions. That's why we recently announced new money for the Ontario Research Fund-Research Infrastructure program. Now 1,800 researchers working on 17 research projects in seven research institutions in the Toronto area are supported by this \$36-million investment. This is good news for our researchers and our research institutions in the GTA.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Soo Wong: It is great to hear that our government is supporting the work that will deliver important discoveries and turn research into leading technologies. This will ensure that Ontario is a world-class research and innovation hub.

In this highly competitive global economy, it is also important that we foster a vibrant science community that will help grow tomorrow's economies and find solutions to important questions.

Mr. Speaker, through you back to the Minister of Research and Innovation: Could the minister please share with us more about the institutions that will be benefiting from the \$36-million announcement, and what kind of projects these investments will help make possible?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Our government recognizes the importance of modernization and development and acquisition of new infrastructure for our research institutions. Our recent investment of \$36 million will support our researchers in the area of medical and also in the energy sector at the following prominent research institutions in the greater Toronto area: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Hospital for Sick Children, Sunnybrook Research Institute, University Health Network, University of Toronto, York University, Ryerson University.

Mr. Speaker, the infrastructure projects funded under this announcement will help support our researchers to collaborate with each other. This collaboration will lead to new technologies and treatments for diseases such as Alzheimer's and dementia, and also research and innovation in the area of energy conservation and renewable and sustainable energy.

This investment will help Ontario remain a leader in research and innovation in the world.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Rural Affairs. This past Saturday, the London Free Press reported that the Western Fair Raceway will lose at least 20 jobs when the Slots at Racetracks Program comes to an end this week. Western Fair is in a relatively good position compared to other tracks in Ontario. It has signed a commercial lease for its slots and is one of only six tracks to get transitional funding. Despite this, they've announced the loss of 20 jobs, even before the official end of the program.

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Minister, Ontario is facing a jobs crisis. London, in particular, has been hard hit with our jobless rate climbing above 9.1% last month, and yet the best racetrack deal you could offer still kills jobs. Why do you have no will to save thousands of horse-racing-related jobs when Ontario is suffering its worst job crisis in a generation?

Hon. Jeff Leal: The member raises a very important question—an important question for all of rural Ontario. As you know, we've put a horse race panel in effect—the honourable John Snobelen, the honourable Elmer Buchanan and the honourable John Wilkinson—who put forward a panel recommendation: 24 recommendations that we are moving forward with. We have reached tentative agreements with six horse racing tracks across the province of Ontario. Mr. Speaker, if I could just take a moment to quote Sue Leslie of the Ontario Horse Racing Industry Association: "We now have the opportunity to plan a more sustainable future for the horse racing and breeding industry, working in partnership with the government instead of competing against the province's other gaming products."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: Minister, all these agreements with our tracks have occurred behind a wall of secrecy. People's livelihoods hang in a balance and you're wheeling and dealing without any scrutiny. All the while, the job losses continue to mount: 800 jobs at Kawartha, 100 jobs at Woodbine, now 20 jobs at Western Fair, and that's just to start.

Last August, you said supporting the horse industry was an investment, an investment that supports thousands of jobs province-wide. Why, since becoming minister, have you changed your tune and decided to kill the jobs of thousands of Ontarians?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Not at all, Mr. Speaker. What I said in August, that the horse racing industry is an important investment—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I found it interesting it was relatively quiet when the question was asked. Let's see if we can get there for the answer.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, the plan that's been put in place, the recommendations for the panel—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I guess this is the week of betrayals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's the second time, member from Renfrew.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, the recommendations that have been put in place by the panel will ensure that there's a sustainable horse racing industry in the province of Ontario, an industry that has a long heritage in this province, an industry that has contributed significantly to rural Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say what John Snobelen said about the Slots at Racetracks Program, when he said it was neither transparent nor accountable. The program in place for the future will be accountable, will be transparent and will sustain an industry important in rural Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. This government hobbled the horse racing industry and threw family farms into chaos when it put down the slots-at-racetracks partnership. Even communities like London that were spared outright track closures are now dealing with the fallout.

Can the Premier please explain to the 20 workers who are about to lose their jobs at the Western Fair Raceway what's so modern and sustainable about unemployment?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: The leader of the third party raises a very important question. We have put a panel in place. The honourable Elmer Buchanan, a former Minister of Agriculture—seems to me he served in the government from 1990 to 1995, which was the NDP government—a man of impeccable integrity, has been going around the province. He has been working with people in the horse racing industry. We've got six agreements in place, and we anticipate more agreements in the future because we believe, on this side of the House, a sustainable horse racing industry is important to the future health of rural Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, this government is gambling with the future of the horse racing industry, and families across Ontario are losing their shirts. Western Fair Raceway made the government's cut, but that's cold comfort for the families of 20 workers who have been put out to pasture.

Since when does modernization entail limping along without a steady paycheck?

Hon. Jeff Leal: As I said in the answer to the first part of the question, we believe in a strong, sustainable horse racing industry in the province of Ontario. We have three impeccable people: John Snobelen, Elmer Buchanan and John Wilkinson. They put the panel together. People in the industry are supporting what the panel is doing. In fact, John Snobelen, who was at the cabinet table when

the SAR program was put in place, has said publicly that that program "was neither transparent nor accountable."

We want to put in place a program that is sustainable and that is transparent to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario, and retain an industry that's important to the future of rural Ontario.

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

M. Shafiq Qadri: J'ai le plaisir de poser ma question à l'honorable Madeleine Meilleur, la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. La semaine dernière a été une bonne semaine pour les francophones de l'Ontario. Nous avons célébré la Semaine de la Francophonie et j'ai aussi appris que la ministre Meilleur a annoncé, durant la fin de semaine dernière, que les francophones de l'Ontario avaient atteint un nouveau sommet démographique.

J'aimerais savoir, de la part de la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, ce que cela signifie pour notre province.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je veux remercier le député d'Etobicoke-Nord pour sa question et son intérêt pour la communauté francophone. Oui, en fin de semaine dernière, j'ai eu le plaisir d'annoncer que la population francophone de notre province a augmenté de presque 5 % depuis 2006. Nous sommes maintenant plus de 600 000 francophones en Ontario. Depuis que nous sommes au pouvoir, c'est une augmentation de 33 000 personnes. Alors, je suis heureuse de voir que nos politiques et notre engagement ferme à notre communauté portent fruit. Je sais qu'avec notre système scolaire en français, notre nouvelle cible pour l'immigration francophone de 5 % et l'amélioration de l'accès à la justice en français, ce chiffre n'ira qu'en augmentant, et j'en suis très fière. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M. Shafiq Qadri: Merci, madame la Ministre, pour votre réponse. Moi aussi, je suis très heureux d'apprendre cette bonne nouvelle et de voir les résultats concrets de notre engagement. Dans ma circonscription d'Etobicoke-Nord, je remarque que j'ai de plus en plus de jeunes commettants francophones. La plupart viennent s'installer ici avec leurs parents, provenant souvent de l'immigration.

La ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones pourrait-elle m'éclaircir sur ce que le gouvernement compte faire pour ces jeunes francophones de ma région?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Une très bonne question; une question d'actualité et bien importante. La région du centre de l'Ontario a d'ailleurs vu l'augmentation démographique la plus importante : une augmentation de 10 % depuis 2006. C'est d'ailleurs pour cela que la première ministre elle-même a fait un engagement ferme pour accroître l'accès aux programmes postsecondaires en français dans les régions du centre et du sud-ouest de l'Ontario pour nos jeunes francophones, pour qu'ils puissent y rester et étudier. Je veux vous dire que le gouvernement travaille fort sur ce dossier.

De plus, plusieurs de nos ministères lancent des programmes pour aider les jeunes francophones à trouver de l'emploi dans leur région, une fois diplômés, à travers le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités et l'Emploi Ontario.

J'étais très heureuse de faire cette annonce-là, à Rockland, samedi soir dernier, et je veux féliciter les quatre récipiendaires du prix de l'ACFO. Merci.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is for the Premier. The McGuinty-Wynne team has created havoc in our education system because they simply don't know how to say no. Just when it seemed like the Liberals finally realized that the spiraling cost of government was unsustainable and the public sector wage freeze could fix it, they chose to kowtow to their union friends instead. Meanwhile, Ontario's public sector continued to swell and the economy has continued to decline.

Now another opportunity to rein in spending has emerged with the proposed wage freeze at the LCBO, but OPSEU is already planning an April strike vote. Premier, will you stop missing opportunities to rein in spending and implement an across-the-board wage freeze before another industry is left in shambles?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.
1130

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question, because it gives us an opportunity to talk about the outstanding work that we have been doing. You know, the government has now beat its targets for the last three to four years consistently—our wage negotiations, which is important, because that is in the end what matters, and what matters are results. We've achieved almost 0% increase over the last two years and we've maintained some degree of stability and harmony in the system, and we're working closely with our stakeholders and our broader public sector. They appreciate, too, we all had to do our part to keep our expense controls in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Speaker, we have here another opportunity to rein in spending with the LCBO, and even the industry's own managers realize it's time. The only ones left in Ontario who don't seem to realize that the gravity of our economic situation is dire are the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals. By the way, here's a sample of your results: Our new Premier has referred to Ontario's debt only once over the past decade in this Legislature in Hansard. Her idea of reining in spending has actually created five new ministries, at a cost to the Ontario taxpayer, and Ontario's economic performance is still below the national average for the 74th consecutive month.

If we're to rely on the new Premier to set the tone, I'm seriously concerned for the future of Ontario. Premier, when will you get serious about the debt and deficit that this government is responsible for and implement an across-the-board wage freeze for Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, negotiations are under way with LCBO. Let them do their job and let's find common ground, and they recognize that we are going for a zero-zero going forward. Everyone seems to understand that except the members opposite, who want to legislate something that now is not required because we're getting the results necessary. That is what is important, Mr. Speaker.

We'll continue to work closely. We're going to continue to be positive, and we look to you to help us put forward a budget that's going to meet the needs of all concerned. It's not about any partisan politics, but the public good and about the people of Ontario. Work with us. Make this budget pass.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, to the Premier: The recent gas plant scandal shows that bad energy decisions can cost Ontarians hundreds of millions of dollars. Given that every nuclear energy project in Ontario has incurred massive cost overruns and that Quebec has decided not to refurbish its only nuclear plant because of its high cost, will the government require an Ontario Energy Board review of the cost-effectiveness of refurbishing Darlington before proceeding with this multi-billion-dollar project?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, we have a long-term energy plan, and we are meeting or exceeding all of our targets in that plan, whether that's generation, whether that's transmissions, whether it's green energy, whether it's nuclear, as everyone knows, and I think the opposition supports nuclear as being a very significant part of our long-term energy plan. We're continuing on that. But we're doing it in a safe, responsible way. We are always examining the costs. We're always examining the safety, and the safety and the costs are paramount in our policy moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The government says that it is carefully considering the Darlington refurbishment. Meanwhile, it has suspended Ontario's power planning process, the IPSP, since 2007. It is ignoring its requirement to actually have a public review of power planning. Now the government is recklessly signing contracts for hundreds of millions of dollars for the Darlington refurbishment before knowing what that project is going to cost. Why won't the government protect Ontarians by requiring an independent review of the cost-effectiveness of that refurbishment before spending any more money?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we have a long-term energy plan. That long-term energy plan is going to be reviewed as we move forward. There are different elements of it that will be tweaked. We will be making some changes in course. We will be talking to the opposition critics on those. We will be bringing initiatives forward, and they will be responsible in terms

of safety, in terms of costs and, most importantly, in terms of reliability. We experienced a system that had no reliability in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003. We have made a reliable system. We've included—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—we will continue to be part of a reliable system moving forward.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Natural Resources. Invasive species like the zebra mussel cost our economy millions of dollars, they pose a real threat to ecological well-being, damaging our ecosystems, and they harm native species.

Minister, I know our government is committed to fighting all invasive species all across this province, and I know your ministry has made significant strides over the past decade. Could the minister please elaborate to the members of this House on the measures that our government is taking to combat the impact of invasive species on Ontario's ecosystems?

Hon. David Oraziatti: I'm pleased to respond to the question. The member has raised a very important issue, and I want to thank the member from Oakville for raising this issue.

Our government is certainly very concerned about the threat of invasive species and remains committed to limiting their impacts on Ontario's ecosystems. In 2011, our government opened the invasive species research centre in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie. This innovative facility is the first of its kind in Canada and a key step in helping to address these issues.

The facility will serve our government and the federal government's collaborative efforts on the management and research of invasive species and plants and aquatic species. Our government also is working very closely with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters to educate Ontarians about where invasive species live and the impact on the surrounding environment.

In addition, we've helped to fund the operation of a hotline which allows Ontarians the opportunity to report their concerns and obtain information.

More in the supplementary, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Minister, for sharing with us those important steps you've taken to fight invasive species; really good news on the strategic plan, on the steps that are being taken to protect the Great Lakes ecosystem, which borders my riding.

I know that aquatic invasive species can have a devastating effect on native species, especially those enjoyed by anglers in Ontario, so I'm glad that you've mentioned some of the species. Specifically, the Asian carp is a concern to me. I know it's a complex issue and one that requires us to work across permeable borders.

Would the minister please update the members of this House about steps the ministry has taken to keep Asian carp, specifically, out of Ontario waters?

Hon. David Oraziatti: Again, thanks to the member from Oakville for raising this important issue. In fact, we view the Asian carp as such a significant threat, we've certainly made them illegal to possess in the province of Ontario. I recognize that this is a complex issue which requires the collaboration of many partners. That's why we've been working closely with our colleagues at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to ensure that we identify the implementation and prevention methods for all possible entry points through our waterways.

We've also been working with our US counterparts through the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee. In fact, they met last fall in Chicago to discuss this issue. This organization will enhance communications between our government, the federal government, the Great Lakes states and the US federal government.

In addition, since 2010, we've been working with the Canada Border Services Agency and we've been able to intercept almost 39,000 pounds of Asian carp destined for Ontario, resulting in \$270,000 in fines.

We'll continue to keep this issue top of mind, Speaker, and address these concerns.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On Thursday, I took the liberty of introducing a piece of information that has set a record. That person wasn't in the House; he now is, so I would like to bring to our attention that on the weekend, again, Monte Kwinter from York Centre reached his 82nd birthday.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Making him one more time the oldest member in the Ontario Legislature.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Grant Crack: It's certainly a pleasure today, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Food, to welcome a number of guests here this afternoon. We have Mark Wales, from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture; Burkhard Mausberg, of the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation; Robert Chorney, Farmers' Markets Ontario; Debbie Field, FoodShare Toronto; Jamie Reaume, Holland Marsh Growers' Association; Bryan Gilvesy, Alternative Land Use Services; Alison Robertson, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association; Karen Hutchinson, Sustain Ontario; Michael Brownbridge, Vineland Research and Innovation Centre; and Don Mills, Local Food Plus. Welcome. Have a great day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests.

Mr. Grant Crack: Can I do one more, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member can just carry on.

Mr. Grant Crack: I have late notice: Hillary Dawson, Wine Council of Ontario and the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? I hope you don't mind—I have one: My other brother, Mr. Steve Peters from Elgin-Middlesex-London, from the 37th, 38th, 39th, and Speaker in the 39th Parliament. Steve Peters, welcome.

As a reminder, you're not allowed to take notes.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I rise here this afternoon to draw attention that for Ontario's horse racing industry and the 60,000 hard-working men and women who are part of it, sadly, the end is near.

In six days, the provincial partnership that gave the horse racing industry a cut of slots revenue will end—killed by the Liberals and passed by the NDP. While the Liberals have already helped to close tracks in Kawartha and Windsor, the NDP has offered nothing better and has instead tried to play both sides, supporting the horse racing industry at home but passing the Liberal budget that killed the Slots at Racetracks Program here at Queen's Park.

While leading tracks like the Western Fair and Woodbine raceway are racing to slash jobs, smaller tracks like Dresden wait for another round of secret deals being put forward by the Liberals and supported by the NDP.

Truly, Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs are the only party to have put forward a solid and comprehensive plan to grow and develop Ontario's horse racing industry. It's simple, really: Horse racing must be a key component of Ontario's gaming strategy. The government should cancel the OLG's plan to abandon racetrack slots, and abandon their plan to build 29 new casinos. Instead, Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs will build partnerships with the horse racing industry, allowing it to survive.

Speaker, we're proud to stand on this side of the House and support Ontario's horse racing industry.

HAMILTON REGIONAL INDIAN CENTRE

Mr. Paul Miller: During constituency week, I had the opportunity to visit a wonderful facility in my riding, the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre. Home to 25 full-time staffers, the HRIC is a non-profit organization that offers a comprehensive spectrum of services to the aboriginal community in Hamilton—all under one roof.

With programs ranging from prenatal care to employment, the dedicated roster of counsellors work one on one with members of the community to overcome whatever challenges they may be facing. The centre also places a specific focus on youth, both in promoting their culture and in providing a location for them to learn, to grow, to interact and to feel welcome.

First opened in 1972, the HRIC has recently undergone a massive expansion, moving from a single home in downtown Hamilton to their new complex in my riding, a 17,000-square-foot facility, just last year. This serves as a further testament to the need for the services they offer and the impact they have had in the greater Hamilton area. I would like to thank the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre for allowing me to tour their facility and for the dedication and commitment they show our community. I look forward to their continuing growth and positive impact in our community in the years to come.

Congratulations, and keep up the good work.

NATIONAL AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY COMPETITION

Ms. Soo Wong: Today, I would like to take a moment to recognize two students from Agincourt Collegiate Institute in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, who will be representing Canada, their school and our community at the National Automotive Technology Competition in New York City.

The National Automotive Technology Competition challenges high school students in a test of both skills and knowledge. Teams of two students race to identify and repair pre-assigned problems on a vehicle, with each correctly repaired component scoring points for the team. This year, over \$3 million in prizes and scholarships will be awarded to the students at this competition.

Grade 12 students Hansen Cao and Huzaifa Misbah, who are representing Agincourt Collegiate in this prestigious competition, also recently finished the 14th annual Toronto Automotive Technology Competition. They defeated 16 other teams from the GTA to win this competition. In April, they will be the only Canadian team representing Canada and the city of Toronto.

I want to congratulate Hansen Cao and Huzaifa Misbah for their accomplishments. I know that every member of this House will be wishing them the best of luck in that competition.

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS

Mr. John O'Toole: First, I'd like to pay special recognition to the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for his remarks this afternoon on horse-racing in Ontario.

I'm pleased to rise today in this House to recognize the courage of an individual and members of the families of those facing ALS. I'd like to pay special tribute to my constituent Gerry Johnston, who has recently been diagnosed with ALS. Gerry Johnston is a friend, a leader in the community and more recently served as chair of the Memorial Hospital Foundation for Bowmanville.

Gerry has been involved at every foundation and community fundraising event I can recall. He is among an estimated 2,500 to 3,000 Canadians currently living with ALS. Sometimes called Lou Gehrig's disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis has no known cure or effective treatment as of yet.

Through research, awareness and supportive services, we can all help our neighbours who have ALS, and in doing so we help their family and indeed the wider community by just telling them we care. Keep in mind that little things like a card, a phone call, a visit or running an errand for a caregiver means a lot.

June is ALS Awareness Month, and I'm confident more opportunities for learning and support will be available in the weeks ahead. I ask all members to support the individuals, families, health care professionals, researchers, volunteers and all those persons, individuals and families. We all need to be concerned about ALS. It's a right to live.

ALAN REDWAY

Mr. Michael Prue: Yesterday was Agnes Macphail Day in the borough of East York. It was the 20th anniversary of the Agnes Macphail Award being given out in East York. It was a wonderful, wonderful day.

Yesterday the award winner was the Honourable Alan Redway. Some of you may have heard that name before. He was Minister of Housing in the Mulroney cabinet, an MP, and an alderman and mayor in East York. But more recently, he has distinguished himself as a private citizen after being out of politics.

He was nominated by a group of people. One of them was Gail Nyberg, with the Daily Bread Food Bank, for the wonderful work he has done with that organization in the last number of years. He was nominated as well by Flemingdon Legal Services because he served on the board of directors. That nomination came from Marjorie Hiley. He was nominated in the Leaside community, for all the work he does in and around the place he calls home, by Carol Burtin Fripp, the vice-president. And he was nominated by the city of Toronto for the work he did in housing, trying to save homes in Toronto, by Councillor Ana Bailão.

He gave a speech, and he was self-deprecating in an inimitable style. He gave credit to his wife, Louise, for everything wonderful he has done in his life, but also to the many volunteers, past and present, who were not so honoured as he was. He said that they probably deserved the award more than he did, but he was wrong. He deserved it, and everybody in East York is very proud of him.

Congratulations, Alan Redway.

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ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Bill Mauro: About six weeks ago in Thunder Bay, I had an opportunity to be part of another wonderful

announcement in my home community. As most people will know, we're currently undergoing a transformation in health care where we are very much trying to focus our resources on community supports to be able to provide people with the right care at the right time in the right place.

In that vein, on February 14 I was very happy to be part of an announcement in Thunder Bay where we announced \$1 million for crisis withdrawal and stabilization services at the Balmoral Withdrawal Management Centre—a detox centre, basically. I was very pleased to be there. What this means is, we will be creating, with about \$1 million in funding, 22 level-3 crisis management beds with 24-hour nursing care.

Speaker, it is hoped that by the second year of this program we'll see a 20% reduction in mental health and addiction visits to the emergency department at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. Coupled with the recently opened 132-bed supportive housing unit in Thunder Bay dealing with the alternate-level-of-care patient situation in our community, with these 22 detox beds and 132 supportive housing units, partnering with St. Joe's, it's my belief that we are really having an impact on the ALC population in our hospital, relieving pressure on that acute care facility and providing care for people where they really need it.

ROTARY CLUB OF SHELBURNE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to recognize the Rotary Club of Shelburne on their 70th anniversary. This organization continues to make significant contributions to key projects benefiting our community and is a great asset to the town of Shelburne.

The Shelburne Rotarians were instrumental in beginning the Canadian Open Old Time Fiddle contest. This is a premier event in Shelburne and showcases some of Canada's best musical talent. The Rotarians continue to play a key role in organizing, fundraising and promoting Fiddlefest, which is now in its 63rd year.

Rotarians are keen to roll up their sleeves and get things done, often working with other organizations and helping local charities that support local youth programs. As a major project last year, the club opened Shelburne's first BMX park.

Shelburne Rotarians continue to support many other local projects, including the recent renovation at the Centre Dufferin District Recreation Centre. They also play an important role in Rotary International, sponsoring projects like its campaign to eradicate polio and supporting a clean water project in Guatemala.

I applaud every Rotary Club of Shelburne member for their service above self, for their numerous contributions and their incredible community outreach. They certainly have had an impressive record of achievement throughout their amazing 75 years. So, on behalf of the Dufferin-Caledon residents and the Ontario Legislature, I'd like to wish the Rotary Club of Shelburne: Congratulations; keep up the fantastic work.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Today, I am extremely proud to do one of the things that I like to do most here in this chamber, which is to speak about my great community of Vaughan.

Vaughan is, as most will know, a truly wonderful city, not only here in Ontario but as compared to others across Canada. I'm extremely proud to say that it has recently received some very positive recognition in MoneySense magazine.

MoneySense magazine recently published its eighth annual list of the best places to live in Canada, which determines which cities have the highest quality of life here in our country. I'm extremely proud to say that my city of Vaughan is ranked in the top 10 best mid-sized cities in Canada, placing eighth out of 46. Vaughan also ranked 23rd overall when it was compared with all large, mid-sized and small cities across Canada, but the honours do not stop there.

Vaughan also placed second in the nation in rankings that listed the best places for new immigrants to live. This is certainly not a surprising figure, given that the residents of Vaughan speak almost 100 different languages. It speaks to how welcoming my community is for newcomers to Canada.

Although these honours are remarkable, they are certainly not surprising. Through the sustained efforts of individuals like Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua and the members of our city council, Vaughan is and continues to be a world-class city, a wonderful place in which to live, work and raise a family.

I am, and continue to be, extremely proud to represent this great community here in this chamber.

CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to share how a carbon monoxide detector recently prevented a tragedy in my riding of Oxford.

A few weeks ago, a group of nine Girl Guides from Ingersoll went to a winter camp near Princeton. When they arrived, they tested the carbon monoxide detector to make sure it was working.

The next morning at about 9 a.m., the alarm went off. When the fire department arrived, they found the carbon monoxide levels at 61.8% at the door. A wood stove hadn't been properly ventilated and was filling the lodge with carbon monoxide. If they hadn't had a working carbon monoxide alarm, the camping trip would have become a tragedy.

I want to commend the Girl Guide leaders—Amy Boddy, Kelly Biers and Rebecca Moore—on their calm reaction and ensuring the girls' safety.

I also want to commend the Blandford-Blenheim Fire Station No. 1 for their quick response, their thorough inspection of the camp and for coming back twice to check to ensure the Guides were safe.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, four times I've introduced the Hawkins Gignac Act, which would make carbon monoxide detectors mandatory in all homes in Ontario. I hope that we can soon pass it to keep more families safe, but in the meantime I want to encourage people to follow the example set by these Girl Guides and their leaders: Check your detector and make sure it works. If you don't have a carbon monoxide alarm in your home, please protect your family by getting one as soon as possible.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR
LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Ms. Wynne moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 /
Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I defer to ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

INDUSTRIE AGROALIMENTAIRE

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's a great honour and pleasure to be here in my role as Minister of Agriculture and Food to introduce the Local Food Act, and I welcome all of our guests. Thank you very much for being here to witness this. Thank you so much.

This bill supports, promotes and celebrates the good things that are grown, harvested and made in Ontario.

J'ai le plaisir et l'honneur d'être ici, à titre de ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation, pour présenter la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux. Ce projet de loi donne son soutien aux bonnes choses qui poussent, qui sont récoltées et qui sont produites en Ontario. Il en fait également la promotion.

I'm committed to reintroducing this important piece of legislation. I committed to that because, if passed, it will form part of a comprehensive local food strategy that will strengthen our agri-food sector and will help more people find, buy and eat food that's made and grown in Ontario, which is very important to our government.

The legislation would do this by allowing the minister to consult with stakeholders and industry to establish goals and targets to help increase local food awareness,

access and sales. It will allow the minister to work with public sector organizations to share information on their progress and their results towards these goals. It would also proclaim a Celebrate Ontario Local Food Week, and it would require the minister to produce a local food report on its activities to support local food.

As I mentioned, this bill is just one part of a broader strategy to promote local food. So, outside of this legislation, beyond the legislation, we're also proposing more education about the benefits of local food; more support, including financial support, for communities and regions working on local food innovation and initiatives; and a commitment to consult with stakeholders on the best ways to promote local food.

We'll lead by example, through an Ontario government policy requiring ministries to consider local food for procurements under \$25,000.

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Mr. Speaker, as we all know, although we won't sing right now, good things grow in Ontario.

Interjection: Sing it.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We could sing it. I don't know if that breaks a protocol in the Legislature.

We want the people of Ontario to reach for local food at home, in restaurants, at work or in schools. I actually believe that the people of Ontario are eager to do this, that they are actually ahead of us on this. They want to buy locally grown food.

Nous voulons que la population de l'Ontario puisse obtenir des aliments locaux à la maison, dans les restaurants, au travail et dans les écoles.

We want to strengthen the connections between rural and urban Ontario; we want to create jobs and economic growth, and this bill will contribute to that. By building a strong local food industry, we also increase Ontario's export potential, delivering the good things grown and processed here in Ontario to the world.

There are consumers who understand and appreciate the benefits of locally grown food, and there's more retail interest than ever. And I would just say that I think there is probably a better understanding about locally grown food than there is about locally processed food. So I'm glad that the processes are here, because it is definitely part of the conversation about how we raise awareness about processing as an important part of the agri-food business.

With countless skilled farmers and food processors here in Ontario, the time is right for this legislation. That's why I'm calling on every member of this Legislature to support this legislation and, by doing so, to support local food. We want everyone to know that good things grow in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: The Ontario PC caucus are strong supporters of local food. Many of us come from rural ridings that have a significant agriculture sector. We know the farmers; we know how great the food they produce is and the challenges that they face. That's why we were so disappointed in the Local Food Act that was

introduced last fall and the version introduced today, which seems, after a quick look, virtually the same.

Last fall, when this government introduced the Local Food Act, agricultural organizations and local food groups were hoping for a bill that would address some of those challenges and make a real impact on our food system. Although the preamble laid out great goals, there was nothing in the bill to achieve them. Local food group Food Forward said that the Local Food Act "must be strengthened." Sustain Ontario said that it had "missed many opportunities." Even our now Premier acknowledged the act's shortcomings when she promised to re-introduce a strengthened food act, and yet the bill introduced today is almost the same as the one introduced six months ago.

There is one change, Mr. Speaker, in that Local Food Week is moved to the week before Thanksgiving. Premier, everyone involved in agriculture knows that's Agriculture Week, and has been for 15 years. It's great to celebrate local food, but you seem to have forgotten where it comes from. Replacing Ontario Agriculture Week is insulting to our agriculture community.

We believe that for a food act to have impact, it must address the entire food system from field to fork and have real, meaningful changes. That's why in our recent white paper, Respect for Rural Ontario, we proposed a comprehensive food act which would support local procurement and help our farmers, food processors and agri-businesses by reducing red tape and supporting Ontario's food system. Our Ontario food act would include a dedicated fund for risk-management programs and one-window access to government for farmers and agri-businesses.

Four months after our leader, Tim Hudak, announced that we would reduce red tape for our farmers by implementing one-window access to the government, the party opposite copied our commitment. We appreciate the acknowledgement that it was needed, but a year and a half later, they have taken no action to implement it. I had hoped to see that in this bill.

Our white paper laid out a number of other actions that would strengthen the food system and promote local food, and I had hoped to see them in this bill as well. It's not enough for government to simply set targets for local food procurement; they must ensure that they have conditions for procurement to succeed, such as our proposal to create a regional food terminal to build on the success of the Ontario Food Terminal.

In their recent green papers, the Greenbelt Fund stated that "lack of access to products from Ontario farms is a fundamental barrier to increase the amount of Ontario food in public institutions." They identified that one of the barriers to government procurement of local food was that the supply needed to be aggregated. This mirrors what we heard from Michigan about their experience with Buy Michigan First.

Two locations we would consider for a regional food terminal would be in southwestern Ontario in London or in eastern Ontario near Ottawa. In both areas, they have

locally grown food that is being loaded on trucks and shipped to Toronto, only to have some of it trucked right back to the region it came from. By creating a regional food terminal, we would reduce our carbon footprint, create jobs, improve market access for farmers and have a reliable supply for restaurants, retailers and food processors.

However, Mr. Speaker, the most significant challenge in our food system is excessive paperwork and government red tape. This government claims they have cut red tape, but 77.2% of farmers tell us it is increasing. That is similar to the results from last year's OFA survey. The problem is not just on farms; 76% of food processors and 86% of agri-businesses also said that red tape was increasing.

This government continues to implement policies without any regard to impact on farmers. The most recent example is the outrageous increase in Ontario Tire Stewardship fees for agricultural tires. For instance, the cost of a tire for a John Deere 9300 has increased from \$61.16 to \$729.12. For a John Deere 9770, the tire fees increased from \$91.74 to \$1,644. It's not enough for government to hold photo ops and introduce a bill with a great name; we need to take real steps to decrease the challenges faced by our agriculture industry.

I'm very disappointed that in six months we have not made progress toward a real food act that would make significant improvements to our agriculture industry and our food system, and that our agriculture industry now gets so little respect that it has been demoted to a part-time minister who is replacing Ontario Agriculture Week with the food act week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour for me to stand in this place and speak on behalf of my New Democratic colleagues on a subject that is very near and dear to all of us: food—proudly grown, processed, sold and enjoyed right here in Ontario. I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome all our agri-food guests this afternoon. Specifically, the topic is the reintroduction of the Local Food Act.

The Ontario agri-food sector contributes more than \$34 billion to the provincial economy and employs more than 700,000 people. It's the cornerstone of our provincial economy. The agri-food sector is incredibly diverse, from large commercial vegetable growers in the Holland Marsh to community gardens in Davenport; from Maple Leaf Foods to Creative Meats in Warren; from Kraft to Thornloe Cheese; from Loblaw's to the local farmers' market; and from McDonald's to the local breakfast restaurant. Agri-food business comes in all shapes and sizes. The one thing that unites all in this sector is the goal to provide families in Ontario with tasty, healthy food. This sector has proven to be incredibly stable, actually growing through Ontario's recent economic downturn.

The New Democratic Party has long supported the concept of local food. That's why our leader, Andrea Horwath, has proposed a private member's bill which

called for hard targets on the amount of Ontario-grown food purchased by provincial government bodies. Not only did we want to set an example for the private sector, but our initiative would have kick-started many local food initiatives by providing at least one solid anchor customer: the Ontario government.

The reintroduced Local Food Act appears to have some of the same intentions, although it lacks any hard targets or achievable objectives. It appears to be a plan to make a plan, a conversation about food, a great press release about motherhood and apple pie, but maybe not much else.

Mr. Mike Colle: What have you got against apple pie?

Mr. John Vanthof: And I like apple pie.

Some would accuse the bill of being a paper tiger, but, if passed as written, its vagueness and lack of detail will actually give the government wide powers to do whatever it wants in this sector, and that should cause widespread concern in the rural community.

Farmers across the province have all had to deal with solutions created by Queen's Park. There is widespread distrust in the rural agricultural community regarding their urban neighbours pushing issues of which they have little understanding or misconceived perceptions of how food is produced.

The New Democratic Party welcomes the introduction of the Local Food Act, not because we believe that the act, as drafted, will be of much benefit to growers or consumers but because it will bring the issues faced by all levels of the food chain to this floor for debate and to committee, if it passes second reading.

1330

These issues need to be addressed. For example, small abattoirs are being forced to close because the regulations imposed on them have little to do with the level of risk. Food safety should never be compromised, but many of the regulation changes that mom-and-pop shops face every day have more to do with the government creating rules to solve problems instead of actually looking at what caused the problems in the first place. There are lots of examples, and I'm looking forward to the debate.

Over time, a rift has grown between urban and rural Ontario. It has been intensified by government actions like the Green Energy Act and the recent decisions regarding the horse racing industry. The reason that rift is so big is because people in the country didn't have a voice before those decisions were taken, and that has got to change.

If the Local Food Act continues on this path of dictating to the countryside what the city thinks is best, it will be a failure, an ultimate failure. It will be up to the government to prove that it really wants to listen to the farm community.

The reintroduced food act does have one change. It's one action item: the creation of a Celebrate Local Food week, and the day has been changed from May to the week before Thanksgiving. That does overlap Agriculture Week, and that is maybe a problem, but agriculture and food are the same thing.

But once again, who asked? Who asked? Agriculture Week has been here a long time. Did anyone who drafted this act call anybody up and say, "Would you like to have it the same week as Agriculture Week?" You see? So, again, please—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. John Vanthof: Hopefully, urban and rural Ontario can start to work together, but we have to stop dictating to the people in the country. We've had enough. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

It's now time for petitions, and I will not go to the member from Durham.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, I'm not going to the member from Durham. I'm just telling you that.

PETITIONS

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Agincourt is historically recognized as north Scarborough's oldest and most well-established community; and

"Whereas the residents of the community of Scarborough—Agincourt share unique interests; and

"Whereas historically Agincourt's electoral voice has always been found in the electoral district north of Ontario Highway 401; and

"Whereas communities, such as Scarborough—Agincourt, with historical significance should be protected and not divided; and

"Whereas the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has recently released proposals to redraw the federal riding map of Scarborough—Agincourt; and

"Whereas 'community of interest' is a mandated consideration of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act; and

"Whereas the original proposal from the commission included a unified Scarborough—Agincourt riding; and

"Whereas the commission's report inexplicably divided the Scarborough—Agincourt community; and

"Whereas the residents of Scarborough—Agincourt should not be divided and the electoral riding should remain, in its entirety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call upon the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario to recognize the historical and demographic context of the Scarborough—Agincourt community and to preserve riding boundaries that include

a protected Scarborough—Agincourt community north of Ontario Highway 401."

I fully support this petition and I will give it to page Andrew to take it to the Clerk.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas local citizens' wishes regarding the development of wind turbines in their vicinity are not being properly consulted or informed;

"Whereas local government decision-making in regard to wind turbines has been rendered powerless;

"Whereas wind turbines have been divisive in other Ontario communities;

"Whereas electricity costs in Ontario have escalated since the introduction of the Green Energy Act;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that no further development of industrial wind turbines take place until citizens are properly consulted and informed, and local government processes are respected."

These are from WAIT—wait until you've heard about them—industrial turbine petitions from Plympton-Wyoming. I agree with this petition and affix my name to it.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas people who feel they have been wronged by the actions of children's aid societies are feeling helpless, with nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate children's aid societies."

I couldn't agree with this more. I will affix my name to it and send it with page Fae to the Clerk's table.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors from more than 80 municipalities and Ontario's largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, seek an immediate moratorium on new wind development until an independent and

comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

"Whereas the provincial Liberal government's study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than that it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

"Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of the health impacts of wind turbines;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately."

I support this and will affix my name and send it with page Kyara to the Clerks' desk.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, beginning January 1, 2013, the WSIB was expanded to include groups of employers and principals who had previously been exempt from the WSIB and had private insurance; and

"Whereas this new financial burden does nothing to improve workers' safety and only drives up the cost of doing business in Ontario; and

"Whereas the economy of Ontario is struggling and government must assist businesses in every way possible;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119."

I affix my signature in full support.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a "Stop the Trades Tax" petition. I shall read it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with new membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government stop their job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

I support this petition and have affixed my signature to it.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas families are concerned about proposed changes to the Special Services at Home Program ... and

the Passport Program under the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act...; and

"Whereas the system should allow for the seamless transfer of benefits to the Passport Program when the person turns 18 years of age, and not the current unacceptable cancellation of benefits and reapplication process that puts the person with an intellectual disability on a huge waiting list for months" waiting "for the re-establishment of their benefits; and

"Whereas, on September 20, 2012, the Legislature passed a motion by Progressive Conservative MPP Christine Elliott to immediately strike a select committee to develop a comprehensive developmental services strategy for Ontarians that addresses the needs of children, youth and adults in Ontario...;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government immediately strike a select committee to develop a comprehensive developmental services strategy for Ontarians that addresses the needs of children, youth and adults in Ontario with an intellectual disability or who are dually diagnosed with an intellectual disability and a mental illness and coordinates the delivery of developmental programs and services across many provincial ministries;

"To declare a moratorium on any changes until the select committee reports back to the Legislature and its recommendations are acted upon."

I will be signing this.

1340

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's newly created Ontario College of Trades is taxing hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

"Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

"Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs, and drive people out of trades;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

I affix my name to the petition and support it, and I'll send it—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Petitions?

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Robert Bailey: I rise today in the Legislature to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's newly created Ontario College of Trades is taxing hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

"Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

"Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs, and drive people out of trades;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

I agree with this and affix my name to it as well and send it down with John.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors from more than 80 municipalities and Ontario's largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, seek an immediate moratorium on new wind development until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

"Whereas the provincial Liberal government's study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than that it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

"Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of health impacts of wind turbines;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately."

I support this petition, I'll sign my name to it and send it with Dasha to the Clerks' desk.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Auditor General confirmed in his December 2012 report that the Champlain CCAC had the longest wait time in Ontario in which 90% of their clients were placed; and

"Whereas the region requires a comprehensive plan assessing the future long-term-care bed needs of the region, as well as the provision of community care for independent and semi-independent seniors; and

"Whereas the number of Ontarians over 75 years of age is projected to increase by 30% by the year 2021, the

year the baby boomers start to turn 75, putting even more demand on the number of available LTC beds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately conduct a study to identify the current and future requirements for long-term-care beds and community care for independent and semi-independent seniors in our region of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, including the city of Cornwall;

"That such a study also identify future solutions for the current and future demand and the possible short- and long-term role the Cornwall General Hospital could play in fulfilling these requirements;

"That the Cornwall Community Hospital be funded to retain the Cornwall General Hospital until such a study is conducted and the role of this building is assessed as a solution of the LTC bed crisis."

I agree with this petition and will be sending it off with page Ali.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. John Yakubuski: Just received a fresh batch. A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's newly created Ontario College of Trades is taxing hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

"Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

"Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs, and drive people out of trades;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with Jacob.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors from more than 80 municipalities and Ontario's largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, seek an immediate moratorium on new wind development until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

"Whereas the provincial Liberal government's study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than that it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

"Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of health impacts of wind turbines;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately."

I support this petition, will affix my name and send it with page Ellen to the Clerks' desk.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: "Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and the quality of life for all future generations;

"Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which will have significant human and financial costs...;

"Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

"Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;....

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in the headwaters of multiple highly vulnerable aquifers is detrimental;

"Whereas the county of Oxford has passed a resolution requesting a moratorium on landfill construction or approval;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To implement a moratorium in Oxford county on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

"That this review of alternatives would give special emphasis on (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can efficiently and practically be recycled or reused so as not to require disposal in landfills."

I thank you very much for this opportunity, and I affix my signature to this petition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time available for petitions this afternoon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(AIR AMBULANCES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES
(SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 21, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / *Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It is a privilege to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 11, the Ambulance Act with respect to the provision of air ambulance services. It is particularly important, Mr. Speaker, because it does pertain to the Ornge air ambulance operation.

Before I go any further, I would like to thank the front-line service providers who have done an exemplary job over this last while, despite the recent scandals that have plagued both this agency and this government. From the pilots to the paramedics and all the front-line service personnel, it is you who deliver the health care services that keep all of us in this province healthy and safe. Thank you. We are grateful to you for your commitment and professionalism.

It's the government's obligation to these front-line workers, as well as to all Ontarians, to ensure the Ornge air ambulance service is delivering world-class care. But Ornge cannot deliver proper health care and treatment when it's plagued by scandals and mismanagement, and Ontarians can't have faith in this service so long as the government fails in its duty to enforce standards of care. In short, in order to safeguard patient care and effectively deliver patient and health care services, we need to ensure that Ornge is subject to proper oversight, accountability and transparency provisions.

1350

I'm very troubled by the fact that the changes proposed by Bill 11 by the government are woefully inadequate. This bill fails to make changes to a dysfunctional organizational structure. At best, it leaves weak accountability measures untouched. At worst, it makes them even weaker. The government's paltry proposals fall short of the substantive overhaul needed to ensure that Ornge does the work that it's meant to do: to keep Ontarians healthy and safe and to respond quickly when their health and well-being are being threatened.

It's deeply concerning to see that this government cobbled together this piece of legislation in haste in order to provide cover for the ministry's and the minister's failure to do their job and to provide the appropriate oversight of the air ambulance service here in Ontario. Specifically, the legislation was put together before the public accounts committee heard from all of the relevant witnesses and before we understood what the conditions were that led to this air ambulance mess in Ontario in the first place.

How can you possibly expect to develop a piece of legislation when you don't fully know what the problem is yet? Yet that's what this amended bill is purporting to do. To this day, we still don't know what fully happened at Ornge because the government refused to strike a select committee and because they were unwilling to retrieve all of the pertinent documents from Ornge. Even

the Auditor General himself noted in 2012 that Ornge wouldn't willingly provide his investigators with documents.

The fact is, since the McGuinty government created Ornge, the operation has been riddled by mismanagement and scandal, as documented by numerous Auditor General reports dating back to 2005. For instance, in his 2005 audit of land ambulance services, the Auditor General recommended that the ministry conduct unannounced reviews to ensure consistent quality of service. The report notes that although the act allows the ministry to conduct unannounced reviews, the ministry continued to provide advance notice of at least 90 days. Here I'm quoting from the report: "Despite the advance notice, about one third, including Ornge, did not pass their scheduled review the first time."

The ministry's failure to listen and take action following the good advice from the Auditor General in 2005 demonstrates that the ministry has failed to provide appropriate service to Ontarians for years. The warning signs were there, and this failure in oversight and management has only worsened in recent years. In the Auditor General's 2012 special report on Ornge air ambulance, he admonishes the government for failing to meet its oversight commitment.

These management failures have had appalling consequences. Millions of dollars are unaccounted for, and millions of dollars were spent on helicopters that were so flawed that paramedics weren't able to perform even basic medical care like CPR. Then again, there were millions of dollars spent on questionable things like speedboats and motorcycles, wine and dining Liberal cabinet ministers, and let's not forget Dr. Mazza's \$15,000 trip to Whistler. Then, of course, there was Dr. Mazza's compensation of \$1.4 million-plus-plus a year, while he somehow escaped the government's sunshine list. The total cost of the Ornge scandal has yet to be tallied, but it's safe to say, Mr. Speaker, that this scandal has cost taxpayers at least \$300 million.

The financial cost pales in comparison to the human cost. A leaked secret cabinet document entitled *Investigations Concerning Air Ambulance and Related Services*, which was circulated among the Liberals' top brass, confirms that the Minister of Health was warned of numerous problems. The leaked document shows that cabinet ministers knew that patients in respiratory distress could not be provided appropriate care due to the interior design of the Ornge helicopters, and yet the government took no action for more than a year. Despite this, Mr. Speaker, the government was inactive for more than a year, as I said, resulting in deaths and endangering patients' lives.

The first incident occurred on July 15, 2011. The document states, "While en route to an on-scene rotary-wing request, the" critical care paramedic "notified Sudbury CCAC he was unable to perform CPR on the AW139 and would have to accompany the patient in the land ambulance. The patient subsequently was declared dead."

The emergency health branch investigation report of this incident, dated October 4, 2011, states, "It was found that due to the interior of the AW139, which was designed by Ornge staff, continuous quality CPR could not be performed in accordance with ... [basic life support] standards per s. 11(a) under the Ambulance Act. It was also found that patients in respiratory distress could not be provided with appropriate patient care...."

On and on, the leaked document goes, warning the Liberal cabinet that Ornge services could be endangering patient lives.

What is perhaps even more disturbing than how very wrong things have gone at Ornge is that the Liberal government failed to step in even when it became clear that things were headed towards disaster. It's important to note that the minister had the power to hold Ornge and its board accountable for their mistakes from the very beginning of the Ornge saga. In introducing Bill 11, the minister would have Ontarians believe that the minister did not previously have the powers to intervene at Ornge. Au contraire, Mr. Speaker: In reality, the minister had the power to intervene at Ornge from the start, under the powers granted to her in the original Ornge performance agreement, as well as under the Independent Health Facilities Act.

With such oversight powers already in place, the minister cannot blame failure to address the problems at Ornge on the absence of legislative authority to intervene.

In fact, the Auditor General reported on several occasions that the minister failed to exercise her authority to respond to the problems at Ornge. For instance, the Auditor General points to funding at Ornge, which increased by more than 20% between 2006-07 and 2010-11, while over the same time period, the number of patients transported by air decreased by 6%. The Auditor General reports that the ministry failed to investigate this problematic activity by neglecting to obtain information on the number of patients being transferred and by neglecting to assess the reasonableness of the cost of the services being provided on a per patient basis.

Mr. Speaker, considering that the ministry failed to exercise its authority as problems plagued Ornge, I'm concerned about the possibility that the passing of Bill 11 will merely assist the government in covering up future scandals and mismanagement. Under Bill 11, cabinet can appoint special investigators to investigate a designated air ambulance service. The bill would also allow the minister to appoint a supervisor to oversee a designated service provider. What's more, these appointed investigators would report directly to the ministry, so instead of providing independent, transparent oversight of Ornge's operation, the government is now going to hand-pick a group of individuals to provide oversight and report directly to those who appointed them. It makes absolutely no sense. These new positions proposed under Bill 11 only facilitate the government's ability to cover up future scandals.

But don't take my word for it. What does the Ombudsman say about the proposed special investigators? He

wrote quite a lengthy letter to the minister, to myself and to the NDP critic, the member for Nickel Belt, on March 1 of this year to express his concerns. I would like to quote from parts of the letter. The Ombudsman states, "Far from being watchdogs, they would operate on a ministerial ... leash."

Mr. Speaker, other proposed measures in Bill 11 may further exacerbate Ornge's dysfunctional operations. For example, in reality, the newly created patient advocate, which the government has positioned as an additional oversight body, is just another Liberal gimmick. As the Ombudsman points out, quoting again from the letter, "He or she resides within the bowels of the organization and cannot be expected to investigate any issue with institutional credibility." I would like to highlight, as the Ombudsman said, that nowhere in the Auditor General's special report did he recommend a new bureaucracy of "special investigators."

Clearly, the recommendations in Bill 11 are not what's needed to provide and improve or oversight at Ornge. The only thing these measures accomplish is to allow the government the ability to cover up any future wrongdoings.

So what can we do to improve oversight at Ornge? First of all, we need to strengthen accountability measures. We need to create targeted accountability measures to address areas where there have been oversight failures. Drawing from the Auditor General's recommendations, we need changes in place to ensure that the amount paid for air ambulance and related services is reasonable for the level of service provided. To do this, the Auditor General recommends that the government renegotiate its performance agreement with Ornge in order to have access to Ornge's subsidiary organizations, of which we now know there were many. The government should also obtain more frequent and informative reports from the Auditor General on the extent to which Ornge's performance expectations are being met. This comes from page 24 of the auditor's report.

1400

Secondly, we absolutely need to give the Ombudsman the authority to investigate. In order to improve accountability, we need to look beyond government to independent institutions like the Ombudsman to provide this level of oversight. Simply creating new internal oversight mechanisms that report directly to the ministry only reinforces the powers of the very people who failed to act in the first place. We need independent and transparent accountability.

In this province, the Office of the Ombudsman exists to support the Legislative Assembly in holding government accountable. It is there to allow the provincial Parliament to scrutinize government bodies. The government's proposal to create a special investigator on a ministerial leash is a far cry from the independent oversight that's so badly needed. Yet the minister has rejected calls for Ombudsman oversight at Ornge. I question why the minister wouldn't want to bring the highest levels of transparency and accountability to overseeing Ornge

after it has clearly been unable to provide the oversight required.

Thirdly, we need to strengthen whistle-blower protection. Bill 11 is entirely inadequate when it comes to providing the level of whistle-blower protection that's needed. To complement and reinforce better oversight and accountability, there must be a culture where people can report on any misconduct or dishonest or illegal activities without fear of suffering consequences.

At public accounts, we heard that the opposite was true at Ornge. We heard that people were intimidated. People were afraid to say anything for fear of getting punished or fired. And we know that even after this scandal broke, the culture at Ornge went unchanged. For example, shortly after Mr. Bruce Wade, who was a helicopter pilot from Thunder Bay, came and gave evidence before the public accounts committee, he was suspended and this was by the new regime. This isn't by the old board; this is the new group of people who were directly appointed by the Minister of Health.

To repair such a dysfunctional environment, there needs to be strong whistle-blower protection so that people will come forward without fear of suffering retaliation. Unfortunately, Bill 11 falls short in creating strong or even adequate whistle-blower protection. Bill 11 imposes limits on which individuals are protected and who they can approach with information, rather than providing across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers. And Bill 11 doesn't provide any deterrent against intimidating whistle-blowers by outlining penalties or ramifications. That is clearly inadequate to deal with the kinds of problems that we've seen at Ornge, Mr. Speaker.

I'm disappointed to see the government's failure to recognize this in Bill 11. The legislation ought to provide a formal process through which individuals can go directly to independent institutions like the Ombudsman in order to ensure proper protection and follow-up. We need to create an environment where employees feel comfortable reporting wrongdoings in a way that's safe and confidential.

I've put these three points forward—strengthening accountability measures, giving the Ombudsman the authority to investigate, and strengthening whistle-blower protection—in concert with Ontario's oversight authorities, who are calling for substantial improvements to the Ambulance Act. This is far more than an issue of legislative authority or adequate accountability; this is a matter of providing air ambulance services to the people of Ontario when they are critically ill.

While I do have a few more minutes, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be helpful to read the letter that we received from the Ombudsman, Mr. Marin, in its entirety, because it really shows how strongly he believes that his office should be given the authority to investigate issues at Ornge and to be the place where people can come forward with their complaints.

"Dear Minister Matthews, Ms. Elliott and Mme. Gélinas,

"I am writing further to the first reading of Bill 11, Ambulance Amendment Act (Air Ambulances).

"There is no doubt that any steps to increase the accountability of the air ambulance service is welcomed. Indeed, in the wake of the many stories of maladministration horrors that have plagued Ornge, sound public policy to bring proper oversight to this organization is still sorely needed.

"While moving in the right direction, measures such as the establishment of an Ornge patient advocate and Bill 11's creation of a new bureaucracy of 'special investigators' are insufficient to provide much-needed scrutiny, and continue to shield Ornge from Ombudsman oversight. My office remains unable to address any individual or systemic issues involving Ornge.

"The Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario is a unique resource to support the Legislative Assembly in holding government accountable. It is there to allow the provincial Parliament to scrutinize government bodies. I cannot think of a more persuasive case for this than Ornge.

"Special investigators,' under Bill 11, would enjoy authority similar to that of my office when it investigates the more than 500 ministries, agencies, boards, commissions, tribunals and corporations that fall under our jurisdiction. But there is an important difference: The 'special investigators' would report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. They would not be independent of government. Far from being watchdogs, they would operate on a ministerial dog leash.

"The newly created office of patient advocate has been positioned by the government as an additional oversight body that alleviates the need to extend Ombudsman oversight to Ornge. The Ombudsman is a fully independent officer of Parliament, established by statute with a mandate to investigate individual and systemic issues. By contrast, the patient advocate reports to an Ornge vice-president, not even to the board of directors. He or she resides within the bowels of the organization and cannot be expected to investigate any issue with institutional credibility. When this position was publicly advertised, the first line of the 'duties and responsibilities' in the job description noted that the incumbent would be required to '[I]nvestigate, resolve, document and report organization-specific patient and visitor compliments and complaints.' Needless to say, a position that involves reporting compliments back to management ought not be confused with the role of the Ombudsman.

"The recent and proposed changes to Ornge are often put forward as responses to the Auditor General's March 2012 special report, Ornge Air Ambulance and Related Services. Yet nowhere in his report did he recommend (a) a new bureaucracy of 'special investigators'; (b) the creation of a patient advocate residing deep within Ornge whose partial responsibilities include being a clearing house for 'compliments'; or (c) the maintenance of the status quo with respect to the exclusion of any role for the Ombudsman.

"Every year, our office responds to tens of thousands of complaints, consistently demonstrating its value to elected representatives and the public. As 'Ontario's watchdog,' we are the gold standard in keeping govern-

ment maladministration at bay. It simply does not make sense to perpetuate our exclusion in a bill that purports to bring credible accountability to Ornge. I would respectfully request your support in bringing the necessary amendments to Bill 11 to ensure that it meets the purpose for which it was presented to the Legislative Assembly."

In short, Mr. Speaker, I totally agree with the comments made by the Ombudsman and would urge the government to heed his words and to do all that they can to bring proper oversight and accountability to Ornge, for the benefit of all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Whitby—Oshawa, and I want to commend her, because not only did she speak in a measured and balanced way; she actually offered the government some very real suggestions. She talked about the intimidation and fear that staff from Ornge had, and even about one poor fellow who found himself out of a job after he came to testify before a committee of the Legislature. Quite frankly, we cannot expect that a government—any government—is going to police itself. This bill is a very pale imitation of what is actually needed. She hit upon exactly the right solution, and that is to have Ombudsman oversight and investigatory powers into an organization like Ornge.

And yet, many times in this Legislature, in enormous circumstances, this government seems terrified of the possibility that somebody of Mr. Marin's credentials, or anybody who occupies that seat as Ombudsman in Ontario—they seem terrified of it. They're terrified when it comes to what is going to be uncovered at the children's aid society, they're terrified of what an Ombudsman might be able to do in terms of Ornge, and they are terrified literally in any place where we think that the Ombudsman could do a good job in the entire MUSH sector; that is, municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals.

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Other provinces have utilized their ombudsmen to do a good job, and that is where government truly becomes transparent. This government, though, appears to not want to go down that road. But I do commend the member from Whitby—Oshawa for understanding that it's having Ombudsman oversight that will truly make government transparent and for the people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to offer my comments on the presentation by the member from Whitby—Oshawa. Having been a member of the public accounts committee in the last couple of years, we've heard from many witnesses and we have been reviewing what was Bill 50 before. I believe that now we're on to Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services.

We've certainly had a lot of discussion in this place, and I'm pleased that we have Dr. Andrew McCallum as

the new CEO. He came to the committee, I think, last week. I was looking to get part of the Hansard from that, but I didn't get it in time. But he gave me a lot of confidence. He gave the committee, I think, a lot of confidence that they knew what they were doing. He's been in the medical system for probably 20 years and has a varied background. He's an excellent person to run this. He was very confident at the stage that they were at with things. They've appointed a new patient advocate. They have installed new medical interiors, which was a problem, of course. They have expanded service in Thunder Bay, established a dedicated patient flight service in northern Ontario, and created a whistle-blower policy.

To keep saying that our whistle-blower policy is not strong enough—it's well laid out in the act and it's a very important part of it. It certainly is standard wording, and it's stronger language than we've seen before. The legislation will enable the air ambulance system to have that oversight; we will have that oversight. It's the proper way to go, and we've discussed it a long time. I think it's a good bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. We continue with questions and comments.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's an honour to stand up and respond to my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa and her quest to get at what's going on here at Ornge.

I'm fairly new in this Legislature, but since I've gotten here, really, this is one of the issues that has dominated this House. We've seen a so-called committee—the resistance to putting a committee together, and, when it finally did come about, delays, recesses: a party that talked about trying to get to the bottom of something, but in actual fact, more than half of the committee time was adjourned just due to, I guess, political tricks, and then trying to tell the public who aren't here and aren't in the committee room that they are actually trying to get to the bottom.

Just after the election, the Auditor General came back and said that he was being blocked from getting information. We had a few opportunities. The leader of the third party had gotten up a year before, had asked questions and was guaranteed there were no issues. Our member Mr. Klees had asked numerous questions; again, he was reassured there were no issues.

But when the Toronto Star broke the story, that's really when the interest came up. We show that there is no interest for oversight. The witnesses we've heard have said that, like all departments—and I guess the people of Ontario would expect this and really hope this is a fact—ministers do have the ability to question and look after their ministries. Is that not an embarrassment, to sit here and say, "I didn't have the power to review"? We wouldn't want to go back to people and let on that we didn't have the power to look after our ministries.

So I think it's just time to get down and put some attention to this. This bill was prorogued as part of their strategy for getting out of information being let loose. I'm waiting to see further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question and comment, and I look to the member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy to join the debate today, of course. I think the comments of the member from Whitby—Oshawa were fair, as all members have been this afternoon. But I've been listening to this debate now for—it feels like—over a year. This is the second time this has been introduced. I have stood up in this House and made comments on this before.

I think members of the opposition have been quite clear about this. Ornge has created a gross issue of trust in the public of Ontario about the way the government runs this province, and it has called into question every agency in this province. Unfortunately, this bill is only going to look at Ornge. I think we've all made it clear that we have fewer concerns about Ornge in the future because it's under such immense scrutiny, but we do have real concerns about this government's track record in the past and how it moves on in the future in terms of transparency and oversight, and the least they could do would be to include Ombudsman oversight of this particular agency.

I think there's an incredible amount of frustration in the general public right now about how government is working in Ontario. I'm proud to be working with members here in the third party, who are committed to actually getting results in this Legislature. I think the public is growing restless, though, and they see a lack of action when it comes to the most pressing issues facing folks.

I was at the Premier's announcement on food earlier this morning. We've been pushing for a food strategy—a strategy that would actually address poverty in this province—for years and years. There's growing unrest over our transit crisis in this province, and yet the public must know that it's up to the government to introduce meaningful legislation, to use their time here wisely. It's their job to bring legislation that we can support, and we would like to see something much more substantial going forward. I think that's not too much to ask.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments, and I return to the member from Whitby—Oshawa for her two-minute reply.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the comments that were made by the members from Beaches—East York, Ottawa—Orléans, Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry and Davenport.

When it comes to Bill 11, the overall concern for me is the fact that we're still undergoing testimony in public accounts. We're still hearing from witnesses. We don't really know exactly what happened at the Ornge air ambulance service, so it's very difficult to deal with legislation in front of us now that purports to deal with all of it. When you don't know what the problem is, how can you craft legislation appropriately?

Even the Ombudsman alludes to that when he talks about the recent proposed changes to Ornge that are often

put forward as responses to the Auditor General's report. Well, the Ombudsman doesn't think very much of these proposed changes, and I agree with him. There is a need for independent Ombudsman oversight at Ornge and in other sectors as well. I would certainly agree with the expansion of it.

I had the opportunity to work with the Ombudsman office for several years during the 1980s, so I know that organization reasonably well. I can assure you that there's a rigorous investigation process that one goes through when investigating subjects pertaining to government operations.

I think that any government should want to have scrutiny by the Ombudsman office because everyone does make mistakes from time to time, and it's important to make sure that those mistakes are brought forward, clarified and resolved. So I think it's important to have the Ombudsman involved in this and in other circumstances.

Secondly, with respect to whistle-blower protection, I have had the opportunity to sit in on some of the hearings at public accounts, and I can tell you that certainly from some of the witnesses we've heard from, people who are involved on the front line, there's no question that there's still a lot of intimidation, still a lot of concern about coming forward with any issues or concerns. We absolutely need to make sure that people are protected by strong, effective whistle-blower protection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 11?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm quite proud to once again be able to have the opportunity to stand in this House and add my voice to a very concerning debate. We've been talking about this for quite some time. The new bill now is Bill 11, but previously I believe it was Bill 50. It's almost identical to the first time it was introduced over a year ago. It could have already been passed and been dealt with by now, but for four months this Legislature was prorogued so that the government could get its house in order. It's really unfortunate and quite a shame that they felt compelled to take care of their own business but that they didn't spend any time making sure that this bill went further and that this bill did better.

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Yes, we're happy that they're moving to bring Ornge under FIPPA and also under FOI, freedom of information. We called for it the first time around, and we're happy that it's there because it's an essential tool for transparency and accountability that will apply to Ornge.

Some of the criticisms of the bill: Has there been a movement forward by bringing other accountability tools to it, such as the Ombudsman oversight, as has been said numerous times already in this House today alone on this debate; making Ornge accessible to committees? It's quite important that we have as many tools as necessary to make sure the government feels that they have the tools necessary, because we've heard too often that they feel that they didn't have those tools.

Most importantly, the government admitted that they dropped the ball and that they could have done more to

prevent this but they failed, and we have seen measures put in place to prevent further Ornges from happening—no, we have not, other than the FOI and FIPPA. We would, of course, like to see the Ombudsman and the accessibility to government agencies.

When I was listening to our critic speak in her opening on this last week, she was stating that she had been subbed into agencies, and they were asking questions and questions and questions on what was happening with Ornge, and they were asking for information to come back. This goes back to 2008, and she said that to this date they still have not received answers back. She has been here for five years, and any time that they asked for information through agencies, that information always came back to agencies. It's questionable as to why not one Ornge question was answered.

We definitely need to see a lot more oversight being proposed for this agency that has been ripped apart and needs to be put back together. Does the government actually think this same kind of disaster is only going to happen at Ornge again? It's doubtful that it will happen at Ornge. There are a lot of people who will definitely be on their toes when it comes to Ornge, but it's not the only place in our health care system where this could be happening. How many Ornges are actually happening in our health care system?

After months of committee hearings, dozens of witnesses and boxes of paper, we're still no closer to understanding how this all could have gone so wrong. The Minister of Health and the Premier would like us to believe that they had no part in creating the disaster that was at Ornge. They blame a faulty accountability agreement, yet they did not even provide the oversight that was prescribed in this agreement. They blamed the fact that Ornge was a federally incorporated entity and that this somehow prevented them from providing the necessary oversight, in spite of the fact that many Ontario hospitals are federally incorporated and this has no impact on their oversight. They blame Ornge, yet Ornge officials have told us that the government was briefed every step of the way. They blame the bureaucracy in spite of the fact that it's clear that MPPs were intentionally shielding themselves from information and there are fingerprints of elected representatives all over this. The government has even tried to blame this on the opposition—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, standing order 23(h) prohibits a member from making an allegation. This member has made a very direct allegation against members of this assembly. That comment should be withdrawn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would just caution the member for Hamilton Mountain to ensure that her language is within the standing orders and with the standards of Parliament. Thank you.

I return to the member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Absolutely. Thank you, Speaker.

They blame Ornge, yet Ornge officials have told us that the government was briefed every step of the way. The government even tried to blame this on the opposition. I've gone there already, but other members decided to involve themselves at this point. This is in spite of the fact that we asked dozens of estimates questions about Ornge in 2010, and these were never answered. Once again, I'll remind the House that our MPPs were asking questions all along the way, and never, ever did we receive answers.

This ignores the fact that the freedom-of-information requests were denied and information such as Chris Mazza's salary was hidden from us. This ignores the fact that the NDP was stonewalled by this government, and then the Liberals have the audacity to turn around and blame the NDP and the PCs.

The minister's story has changed all along the way. First, she told us there were alarm bells raised in January 2011. Then she revised the story and said there were not. First, she told us that she had fired the board at Ornge, and then she told us that she did not have the power to do this and they resigned voluntarily.

What we have seen at Ornge is not just incompetence or mismanagement. Instead, we see an organization that is fleecing the Ontario public, an organization that built a complex web of corporate schemes to benefit the few at the top of the organization.

There was spending going on at Ornge that wasted our precious, precious, precious health care dollars to be buying speedboats for water-skiing, helicopters that could not transport patients. What were these things used for? Did they benefit our patients in northern Ontario who have no other ambulance services other than air ambulance? Did they benefit patients anywhere in this province? I don't think so.

But we also see a government that was, at best, complacent in allowing these self-interested transactions to occur, and at worst, purposely hiding the growing corruption that was allowed to take over Ontario's air ambulance provider because it was benefiting those at the top. In fact, we now know that the government fully knew that Ornge was privatizing some of their services and that this was part of their purpose.

The bill before us was introduced on the same day that the Auditor General released his damning report on Ornge—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize. I missed it initially, but I'm going to have to ask the member to withdraw her unparliamentary comment. She used the word "corruption."

Miss Monique Taylor: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: In fact, we now know that the government fully knew that Ornge was privatizing some of their very own services for their very own purposes.

This bill was an attempt to change the channel on the same day that the Auditor General—but this bill falls short of being able to do that. The NDP is very concerned

about the basic transparency measures that are still not being provided. Ornge will not be subjected to the Ombudsman's oversight, and this is really quite a shame because, as we know, there are many, many agencies that really do need the Ombudsman's oversight, including the children's aid society, which I will be bringing forward later this week.

Air ambulances often deal with life and death situations, but sometimes things go wrong. For those families to know that they can rely on the excellent services of the Ombudsman for impartial third-party answers often helps bring closure.

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You would think that this new-found desire for transparency and accountability would bring us Ombudsman oversight, but no: Ornge remains outside of the mandate of the Ombudsman. Ornge will also still not be able to be called to public accounts. Why? What reasons can the government give for their reluctance to take these easy and cost-free steps? At this point, we have been given no reasons.

Apart from the matter of the sunshine list, there are many outstanding questions of whether the ministry did their job in providing adequate oversight of Ornge. In fact, in the Auditor General's report on Ornge, he said, "In February 2006 ... the Ministry"—of Health—"committed to set standards and monitor performance against those standards to ensure that the 'end result will be improved care, improved access to service, increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of service, and the assurance of greater fiscal and medical accountability.'"

But the ministry never fulfilled their end of the deal. As the auditor said in his report, "However, the ministry has not been obtaining the information it needs to meet these oversight commitments." The fact is that the performance agreement included so many tools of oversight, but the ministry failed to do its job.

The Minister of Health's main line of defence is that this original performance agreement tied the government's hands; although the ministry wanted to keep Ornge in line, they were first prevented by this inadequate agreement and were lied to by Ornge executives. However, in the public accounts committee on April 25, this issue was explored when Lynne Golding, a former lawyer for Ornge, was called as a witness. The interchange between NDP MPP and member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton Jagmeet Singh and Ms. Golding provides important insight:

"Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The minister has indicated a number of times—and I think you've already answered this, but let's make it clear: The minister indicated that the existing performance agreement was not strong, didn't give her the ability to do the proper oversight. I just want you to respond, given the fact that you've indicated a number of tools that the minister did have, including the ability to issue the notice of default or at least threaten to do so, including the right to terminate the agreement based on the 15 pages of covenants. What's your response to that?"

"Ms. Lynne Golding: Those were all of their rights. In addition, the ministry, as the chief funder of Ornge, had great powers of moral suasion. I can tell you, all of my broader public sector clients work very hard to make sure that the ministry is kept happy with them."

If the performance agreement did in fact provide the necessary tools of oversight, what does that mean about the government's role?

Another fond excuse of the government has been that the federal incorporation of Ornge prevented adequate government oversight, but this too appears to be a red herring. It was first contradicted by Peter Wallace, secretary of the cabinet and head of the public service. Then it was contradicted by Lynne Golding, from the law firm who advised Ornge. Here is an exchange between the NDP health critic and Ms. Golding at public accounts on April 25:

"Mme France Gélinas: In layman's terms, whether you incorporate at the federal level or at the provincial level, like many hospitals do, it changes in nothing the responsibility or the oversight of the government of Ontario, more specifically the Ministry of Health.

"Ms. Lynne Golding: That is correct. There are at least half a dozen hospitals incorporated federally. I think they all take the view that they are subject to the laws of Ontario and the dictates of the Ministry of Health."

It seems that the minister uses that they're incorporated by the feds when it's convenient for her and when she feels it benefits the needs, which—you either have it one way or the other.

The other argument that the Minister of Health is fond of employing is the idea that her office was deceived and kept in the dark about the goings-on of Ornge. Well, if you don't turn the lights on, then you are going to be in the dark, because it has been said previous times that she was notified. She was sitting in on the meetings. So there was absolutely no idea she could have been kept in the dark.

But here again, the story doesn't add up. Mr. Alfred Apps was called—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, a point of order again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, on a point of order: Perhaps the member from Hamilton Mountain ought to read this stuff that her people send her. Standing orders (h), (i) and (j) prevent her, in her remarks, from making an allegation against another member, from imputing false or unavowed motives to another member, and from charging another member with uttering a falsehood, all of which she has done in her last set of remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I don't find that there's a valid point of order.

I return to the member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll talk about the following interchange between Mr. Jagmeet Singh—

Ms. Soo Wong: What riding?

Miss Monique Taylor: —the MPP for Bramalea-Gore-Malton, and Mr. Alfred Apps.

I'll quote from Bramalea-Gore-Malton: "You indicated that the government was thoroughly briefed on every aspect of Ornge before any step was taken."

Mr. Alfred Apps stated, "Correct."

The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton then stated, "How do you know that?"

Mr. Apps answered, "Because I participated in those briefings as a lawyer, reporting on the structure, how Ornge was insulated, what the rating agency thought of the structure."

Mr. Apps went on to say that "the government was thoroughly, painstakingly and, in all cases, truthfully briefed in advance of Ornge taking any of these actions." Once again, convenient.

We know that the chief of staff in the Ministry of Finance received a half-hour briefing from Ornge. We know of multiple conversations and meetings. And if we are going to take the minister's first story, the alarm bells were raised in 2011. It's unfortunately evident that no action was taken to address these concerns.

The infamous letter that was copied to 14 senior public servants in January 2011 seemed to have been ignored or not seen by virtually all 14 people. In all of our days at public accounts hearings, we have not heard of any concrete action taken following this letter.

I really don't have a lot of time, Speaker. The member opposite seems to have run my clock, as I'm sure was his choice—

Mr. Michael Prue: Intent.

Miss Monique Taylor: —and intent to do so. But—
Interjections.

Mr. Michael Prue: Keep going.

Miss Monique Taylor: The whole matter is, this bill just certainly doesn't go far enough. We're happy that the FOI is there, that FIPA is there, but we really need to see the Ombudsman oversight. We need to make sure that he has the powers to be able to look at this agency, and this agency has to come before government agencies so that we can make sure that we have the ability to ask questions on a regular basis and to stop the Ornges from multiplying.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to stand and respond to the member for Hamilton Mountain.

The public accounts committee, of course, is continuing its hearings. We're getting prepared to write the report, and the information will all come out. I don't think we're talking about the history of Ornge. The Ontario Provincial Police is involved in a criminal investigation. So I think we have to look at where Ornge is today:

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—hired Dr. Andrew McCallum as president and CEO;

—from October to December 2012, Ornge air crews and aircraft were available to respond to calls 97% and 97.3% of the time;

—93% of the calls Ornge received are for transport between facilities. Currently, 96% of these were confirmed within 20 minutes;

—7% of Ornge calls are scene calls, usually emergency cases. Currently, 90% of these were confirmed within 10 minutes;

—there's a new performance agreement in place;

—significant improvement of accountability and transparency is there by posting executive expenses and salary ranges;

—introduced new policies and procedures on conflicts of interest;

—whistle-blower protection has been a big discussion here. Whistle-blower protection is significant in this new bill;

—appointed an independent ethics officer to receive, investigate and track employee disclosures as part of the new whistle-blower protection policy;

—hired a patient advocate to work with patients and their families to address concerns and advocate for operational improvements;

—installed new, improved interim medical interiors in the helicopters;

—created a dedicated flight service for the Sault-Ste.-Marie-to-Sudbury corridor, increasing patient access to out-of-town treatments; and

—launched a pilot project in Ottawa.

Many things are happening at Ornge. It's all good news—we just heard from Dr. McCallum last week—and this bill is required in order to finish that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: We've been hearing some important details today, and shocking—I guess we see some more of what some people might perceive as—delay tactics. We're really trying to get to the bottom, and I know Ornge has made some changes. But we hear the changes they've made to the helicopters actually didn't work and put patients in harm's way, to the point that CPR wasn't possible.

Really, what we want to do is see a government that's actually trying to get to the bottom of it, not a government that is taking every opportunity it can to make sure the word doesn't get out. Whether we see the Auditor General, whom I guess the people of Ontario would consider an impartial judge, being stonewalled, trying to get information—interestingly enough, it was only after the election that steps were taken to get that information out, after the urging of the Toronto Star, which broke the story that talked about the issues. The people of Ontario found it quite hard to believe that salaries of \$1.4 million-plus-plus, as our member from Whitby–Oshawa mentioned, went on unknown.

We had some of these people drop off the sunshine list, and we see a government that has no interest in pursuing it, even though we're being asked by a member of the third party and a member of the second party about what the issue was and why, all of a sudden, they took a

huge pay cut, as one might expect when you fall off the sunshine list.

It all goes to the many warnings and the many issues that came up here time and time again. But there was no oversight. Witnesses have said there were all kinds of opportunities. The simple one is, just don't write the cheque. That gets people's attention pretty quick, especially when they're making \$1.4 million.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for her comments. I'd also like to bring to the attention of this House that from what I've seen in the last five years, this place wastes billions of dollars a year. You want money for health? You want money for education? You want money for all the other programs we could put in? We could easily fund them with the waste this government has done in the last eight years.

I'll give you one perfect example. They wanted to have an electronic health care system for Ontario. It happened to sit on the committee that day. They made their presentation, and I asked them some questions. I asked them what the cost to the taxpayer was, to that point. It was \$288 million in five years, and they still didn't have an electronic health care system for Ontario.

And I said to them, "Okay, how much went for hardware, software, consultants—all the things that are involved in doing this work?" They wouldn't answer me. So my party had to pay freedom of information. I'm a sitting member on that committee, and our party had to pay freedom of information to find out the details.

They came back a month later later, Speaker, and begrudgingly said, "\$100 million we got out of it for the taxpayers." I said, "What happened to the other \$188 million?" Well, guess what? In five years, \$188 million went to Liberal-friendly consulting firms. So I said, "\$188 million? With the technology we've got today?"

Speaker, that's one ministry. There are 22 ministries. There are another 150 agencies, committees and tribunals in this province that are governed by that body over there. I'm telling you right now, they waste billions of dollars.

You want health? You want education? You should have Ombudsman oversight on everything that this place does. You'd save billions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say that the administration of Ornge, the board of directors, failed every Ontarian. They failed every Ontarian, and it was embarrassing.

Today I'm standing up to congratulate our Minister of Health for everything she did to correct this situation. I'm very impressed to see, in a short period, everything she did to put this much-needed organization on the right track by changing not just the structure there but the objectives and the mandate of that organization.

I look at that as a former nurse, and I'm very impressed. Everything is centred around the patient—pa-

tient care. For example, we have hired a patient advocate. A patient advocate, for me, is like the Ombudsman, because when something goes wrong, you talk to the management—the first thing to do—but when it doesn't work, then you have the patient advocate. The patient advocate's responsibility is to work on behalf of the patient to make sure that if there is a bad situation, or no proper care—this patient advocate would be there to advocate on behalf of the patient.

The board has also appointed a new CEO, Dr. McCallum. He was the chief coroner until recently—a very dedicated and very fine person who has patient care as his priority.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I now return to the member for Hamilton Mountain for her reply.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you for the comments that came from other members of this House—

Mr. Bill Walker: Mississauga—Streetsville—special commendation.

Miss Monique Taylor: Yes—especially to Mississauga—Streetsville for delaying my debate time.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line, as the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek has said, is, the government has wasted billions of dollars—billions of dollars—on scandals in the last how many years? In the last 10 years since they've been sitting in that seat, we've had eHealth, we've had Ornge, we've had gas plants. Billions of precious dollars that are needed for services in this province have been wasted.

We've talked about poverty in this House. We've talked about the lack of housing in this House. We've talked about the tremendous amount of food banks that are being used across this province and that we have a government that just wastes on a regular basis and then wants to blame everybody else. There's something wrong with that. There needs to be a change.

New Democrats have put forward proposals and priorities to get results for the people of this province. We hope that you will be looking at these come the budget, making sure that we're closing tax loopholes, that we're not giving away more dollars that we certainly don't have. We need to make sure that we keep every single dollar precious and use it to its full ability, and make sure that people aren't falling behind.

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Like I said, Ombudsman oversight of another agency: It couldn't hurt to have him overlooking every single agency in this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a real privilege for me to have a chance to stand in the House today and speak to Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services, a bill that's now at second reading and a bill that I believe and sincerely know has a great deal of merit.

I want to begin, as several of my caucus colleagues and members opposite did in the course of their deliberations and remarks today, by thanking and paying tribute

to the more than 600 front-line employees, the women and men who do the phenomenal work at Ornge. I believe it was the member from Ottawa—Orléans who mentioned earlier that those individuals meet the targets for the quality-of-care metric of 90%. They exceed the aviation safety target. From October to December 2012, Ornge air crews and aircraft were available to respond to calls 97% of the time.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Great story.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a great story. And I think it's worth noting as well that 93% of the calls Ornge receives are for transports between facilities. Currently, 96% of these were confirmed within 20 minutes. Lastly, on this score, 7% of Ornge's calls are what they call "scene calls," usually emergency cases, and currently 90% of those were confirmed within 10 minutes. So from that perspective, as I begin my remarks today, I just want to say that those individuals who work on the front line of this organization, those women and men, the 600 of them, deserve the gratitude and the appreciation not only of the men and women here in this chamber, but of people right across the province of Ontario because of the outstanding work that they do. I know that they have that support and that gratitude from our minister, from our Premier and from our government.

It struck me, as I listened to the members opposite speak about this particular act, that—as people will know from my maiden speech just last week, I have relatively recently come off the campaign trail, and like all of us, I'm in regular conversation with the people of my community. But I had the chance to go through that formal conversation, or dialogue, known as a by-election, not that many months ago. The one thing that struck me over and over again throughout that—I'm going to be honest with everyone here in the House. This issue, the issue of Ornge—I guess not surprisingly, given some of the media that we've seen on this issue—did come up from time to time. But what I heard over and over again from the people of my community of Vaughan is that, while they had questions about what had happened at this particular organization over a period of time and what they were reading about, what they stressed to me was that it's extremely important for government, regardless of partisan strife, to find a way forward, to find reasonable solutions, practical solutions, that make sense in terms of improving things.

They're not looking to blame. They're not looking to scapegoat. They're not looking to dig up nothing but scandal and dirt and the rest of that stuff. They want to make sure that the men and women they send to this chamber are individuals who are willing to work together, to co-operate, to find the kinds of solutions that they will respect.

Speaker, not just on the health care issue—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize. I would ask the members of the opposition to refrain from heckling the member for Vaughan so that I can hear him.

I return to the member for Vaughan.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Much appreciated.

As I was saying, not just in the health care file, but on a variety of issues, people said to me in my community—and I'm willing to bet, if every member opposite was going to be completely honest on this particular topic, they would say the same thing: The residents of their respective communities want to make sure that we are all working together to find solutions.

And in this particular situation, on this particular bill, this bill represents the culmination of a great deal of work, a great deal of positive work—people on this side of the House looking for the kinds of positive, realistic, practical solutions so that we can make sure that those 600 front-line workers at Ornge are backed up by the kind of infrastructure to make sure that they can keep doing their job in the best possible way.

Over the last number of weeks and days, as we've been discussing these issues here in this House, I've continued to have those ongoing conversations and dialogue with the people of my community. I've been asked the question from time to time: What's happening with Ornge? And I've had the opportunity to let them know about some of the improvements that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is proposing in this legislation, and while they continue to have questions, while they want to make sure that we are aware of the fact that there may continue to be challenges, as there are in any organization like a provincial government, they are heartened, they are encouraged to know that we are moving in the right direction, that we are proceeding in the right way. As a wise person once said, there's never a wrong time to do the right thing, and that's exactly what we've done here with this particular bill.

I could also say—and it's been mentioned, I know, by members on this side of the House over the course of the debate today and previously, prior to this particular legislation—there's a great deal of improvement around governance: for example, Dr. Andrew McCallum being hired as president and CEO, Rob Giguere as the chief operating officer—people with impeccable credentials; appointing a new board of directors led by Ian Delaney; appointing a quality-of-care committee; submitting its first quality improvement plan.

There are a ton of improvements that have taken place with respect to responding to the concerns that the people of Ontario and the people of my community of Vaughan have had regarding Ornge. I think everyone in this House should take a moment to pay tribute to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care because of her outstanding leadership in responding to a very challenging file over the last number of months—incredible work from the minister. I know that she and her staff and her team and the officials at the Ministry of Health continue to work as hard as they possibly can, as all of us do on this side of the House, to make sure that we go forward in the most positive way, that we go forward continuing to make the improvements that we need to make in order to guarantee the residents of my community of Vaughan and the people right across Ontario that we are doing the very best job that we possibly can to make sure we are delivering the kind of results they deserve.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Working 24/7.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Absolutely, working 24/7. The member from Peterborough is 100% right.

In addition to some of the other changes that I talked about a second ago in terms of individuals, we see that the new team at Ornge has a new patient advocate. We have installed new medical interiors in the helicopters. We've expanded service in Thunder Bay.

Interjections.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: You know, Speaker, I will say for members opposite who talk an awful lot about the concerns of northern Ontario, the fact that they would speak over the point that I just made about Thunder Bay speaks volumes about their concern for the north. I sit here and look at the member beside me here, who represents a wonderful part of Thunder Bay, and I know that he's delighted to hear about the expanded service that we've delivered there.

We established a dedicated patient flight service in the north—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There's rarely silence in this House, but the Speaker does need to be able to hear the member who has the floor, and the member for Vaughan has the floor. I would ask the members of the opposition to refrain from heckling so that the Speaker can hear the member for Vaughan make his presentation.

The member for Vaughan.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly quite the experience. Last week with my maiden speech there was no heckling. It's nice today to actually get into the cut and thrust of things a little bit more. I sincerely appreciate the passionate interjections of the members opposite.

I'm also going to mention what's been established as a dedicated patient flight service, again in northern Ontario. I want to stress that that's an indication that we on this side of the House understand the importance of continuing to provide exemplary service to the residents of northern Ontario, and we will keep doing that.

Interjection: Exemplary.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I know it's a big word.

We created a whistle-blower policy, something that's extremely important to make sure the people who want to come forward with concerns do have an understanding that they will be protected in doing so.

As I mentioned a few minutes ago, Ornge has also submitted its first quality improvement plan, something that indicates very clearly that we are moving in the right direction.

The legislation specifically that we're talking about today takes additional steps in ensuring that we will restore public confidence in Ornge. That's extremely important, as I said at the outset. The residents of Ontario, the residents of my community and those of my seatmate's community, the residents from Scarborough—Agincourt, want to hear about the fact that we're moving in the right direction.

This particular legislation, if passed, if the members opposite can see their way to looking past the partisanship and actually want to work with us in terms of getting real positive results for the people of Ontario, for the north, for the south, for the east and west—if the members opposite are willing to work together with us on this and pass this particular bill, this bill will entrench protections for employees who disclose information to an inspector, to an investigator or to the ministry.

This legislation will allow the government to take control of Ornge in extraordinary circumstances through the appointment of a supervisor or to appoint special investigators, just like we do currently with our hospitals.

In addition, this legislation, if passed, will allow the government to change the performance agreement with Ornge at any time.

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Those are the kinds of bold, innovative, striking improvements that this government has presented with respect to how we can improve circumstances and make sure that the individuals across Ontario have that confidence in our government, continue to have the confidence in our government, and have confidence that what's happening at Ornge is something they can be proud of, as we are on this side of the House, under the leadership of this new team.

I'd also point out that in addition to what I mentioned a second ago, our government is also proposing to make Ornge retroactively subject to freedom-of-information requests, which is completely in keeping with our commitment to transparency across the broader public sector.

Interjections.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, I sincerely appreciate the enthusiastic support of my colleagues, but that last sentence, I think, bears repeating because it's extremely important.

Hon. Jeff Leal: One more time, Steven.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: We are proposing to make Ornge retroactively subject to freedom-of-information requests, which is in keeping with our commitment to transparency across the broader public sector.

Interjections.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, for those individuals watching at home right now, whether they're from my community or they're from the communities represented by members opposite: I find it remarkable that members opposite will want to trample all over me saying something as clear and as important and as articulate as what I just said a second ago.

What we are doing regarding Ornge is so that we continue to be in keeping with our commitment to transparency.

Interjections.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: How the members opposite can speak over our desire to make sure that we remain transparent is beyond me, and it's certainly beyond the members of my community.

There are a number of other things that we are doing or we are proposing to do with this legislation that I'm

going to discuss in just a couple of seconds. But there are some other things that I want to point out.

I mentioned a few minutes ago that what we are doing is we've hired a patient advocate regarding Ornge to work with patients and their families, to address concerns and to advocate for operational improvements.

I mentioned the actual technical machinery, the helicopters themselves, a second ago. I should point out that we've installed new, improved interim medical interiors in the fleet of AW139 helicopters, after extensive consultation with front-line staff, those 600 women and men, some of them who are actually working with this equipment on a daily basis. We've been talking to them and we've been responding to their concerns and their ideas, because they are, after all, the ones who have the expertise.

I mentioned Thunder Bay. I mentioned the Thunder Bay base a short while ago, and I think it bears repeating. We took steps to introduce a third line of paramedics at the Thunder Bay base, to help ensure 24/7 service for northern Ontario. Surely that's something that the members opposite, who talk an awful lot, who talk a really good game about wanting to respond to the concerns of northern Ontario—surely, Speaker, that's something that they can applaud, that they can support.

We created a dedicated flight service for the Sault Ste. Marie-to-Sudbury corridor, increasing patient access to out-of-town treatment.

We launched a pilot project in Ottawa on the use of critical care land vehicles in place of a helicopter for certain calls, when deemed appropriate for patient care.

Speaker, when I talk to the women and men of my community, when I explain to them that these are the concrete steps that we are taking to improve the situation at Ornge, they are thoroughly impressed. They understand that our government is reacting in a positive, proactive way.

Over and over again, what they want to know is whether or not members opposite are working together with us on this. I understand concerns, some of which have been valid, over the last number of weeks and months; I understand there are concerns. But when people see that we have concrete, appropriate steps that are being proposed by this legislation, when they see that there's a recent track record at Ornge with the improvements that Minister Matthews and her team have helped make, when they see that kind of bold leadership from the Wynne government on this particular file—Speaker, people in my community, and I'm sure in some of their communities, don't understand why the members opposite wouldn't want to work with us on some of this stuff.

I think it's really important to note as well that we— you know, this actually reminds me a little bit of the government's experience over the last nine or 10 years with the health care sector, generally speaking. Whether it relates to the steps that we've taken in response to what has happened at Ornge or, generally speaking, how we've cleaned up the mess that was left, the mess that we inherited, in the health care sector; whether it relates to

the air ambulance performance; whether it relates to the construction of hospitals; or whether it relates to the firing of nurses—Speaker, over and over and over again, first under the leadership of the member from Ottawa South, the former Premier, and continuing under the leadership of the current Premier, the member from Don Valley West, Kathleen Wynne, our government remains committed to delivering the kind of positive results in health care, in education, with respect to crucial infrastructure. And, Speaker, I would argue that the air ambulance system we have in the province of Ontario—Ornge—is a crucial part of that health care infrastructure that I'm talking about.

You can see, Speaker—anyone can see, looking at this in an objective way—that we have taken steps repeatedly over the last nine years to make sure we have the kind of improvements needed so that the people of Ontario have confidence in this government. In every conversation I've had in the six or seven months or so that I've had the chance or the privilege to serve the people of Vaughan, it's clear from the people of my community that they understand that, while no government can expect to be perfect—no government is expected to be perfect—governments that, along the way, find appropriate ways to improve situations should do so.

Over the last six or seven months since I've had the privilege of being elected to serve here in this hallowed chamber, I've seen us do this with Ornge—I've seen us do this with a variety of other situations and other issues. I know that the people of my community are responsive to the fact that we are moving in the right direction, the fact that we've brought a new team online, the fact that we have a new board of directors, the fact that we are delivering the kind of technical equipment that the employees—those 600 front-line employees I talked about and paid tribute to at the outset of my remarks—need for them to continue to do the job they do so well for the people of Ontario.

When people in my community hear that we are taking these steps, they say, “While no government may be perfect, at least we know that at Queen's Park we have a government that's responsive. At least we know we have a government that responds to our concerns for greater transparency, that responds to the concerns that we express around how tax dollars are spent.”

They appreciate the fact that, through legislation like this, we try to reach out to the members opposite from both of the other parties. I think I wouldn't be surprised in some cases to learn that perhaps there's some disappointment that the members opposite, while it's perfectly acceptable that they continue to express concern, wouldn't want to jump on board being supportive of some of the initiatives we have taken and that we continue to want to take with this particular legislation. I'm sure that individuals across my community—individuals representing their communities—would want a better sense of why they feel it's more important to be obstructionist and more important to be critical in a very highly partisan way instead of finding ways to work

together with our government, to work together with the Minister of Health and our Premier to engage in that kind of dialogue.

Not everything we put forward every single day of the week will be perfect. We look forward to having their input, but only when the input is done in a constructive way, when the input is done in a manner that's consistent with trying to provide the best possible results for the women and men of Ontario.

That is what we have done with this legislation. We are moving in the right direction. There are a number of improvements; I mentioned them a second ago. Providing additional service to the people of northern Ontario—I know that was something that was extremely important to Minister Matthews and her team, and to all of us here on this side—to make sure we continue to meet those metrics that I outlined at the outset of my remarks, to make sure the individuals working at Ornge can perform to the highest possible level.

What we are doing with this legislation is doing our very best to provide the people of Ontario with a sense that we are moving in the right direction, with a sense that we have listened to the concerns expressed by the people to make sure we are providing as much transparency as is required and should be required for this kind of undertaking, but at the same time making sure that the employees at Ornge have the technical machinery, equipment and know-how so that they can continue to provide that excellent level of service, like they've done over the last number of years.

As I said earlier—as I said, in fact, at the beginning—people in my community and in every community across the province of Ontario don't expect perfection of government, but they expect solutions. They expect that government is going to work together regardless of stripe, regardless of colour, regardless of whether one is a Liberal or not. They want to make sure we move forward in the right direction, that we co-operate and that we find those meaningful, practical solutions so that we can continue to deliver those kinds of results. It's what we're doing here with Ornge; it's what we've done over the last nine or 10 years as we've invested more in health care, as we've found creative ways to invest more in education, as we've done with respect to investing in crucial public infrastructure.

When I think of my own community in Vaughan—the fact that we are tantalizingly close to being out to tender for our new Vaughan hospital, the fact that we have a subway that's under construction, the fact that I continue to advocate daily, it would seem, for the extension of Highway 427—I know that I am able to do these things, that I am able to advocate for these kinds of projects because I am part of a government, and we have a government here in Ontario today that understands the importance of investing in the province and investing in the people. Not a narrow-minded government, not a government that's unduly partisan, but a government that understands it is important to work with the opposition, but above all else that it's important to continue to drive

results—not just any kind of results, but positive results. It's the reason I was proud to stand as the Liberal candidate in the by-election in Vaughan back in September. It's the reason that it was such a delight to knock on the thousands of doors in my riding, to let them know about the vision that we have for the future of Ontario. It's why I continue to be very proud of our government, very proud of the Minister of Health, and why I'm so happy to support Bill 11. I ask the members opposite to join us in supporting this very important piece of legislation.

1510

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to offer a response to the member from Vaughan. He spoke, in his opening remarks, about moving forward, and he wanted to find solutions. I find it striking strange, then, when we ask for a select committee to be able to get to the bottom of this issue and truly be able to understand what exactly were all the mistakes they made so we can prevent them, that they block that at every step of the way.

I'd offer, perhaps, a suggestion that maybe they should consult us before they make all these boondoggles, to help them get their way out of it, and maybe we could get along with things that are more proper.

I can't understand, in this bill, why they want to add another level of bureaucracy. They want to add special investigators. I think, on behalf of my caucus, the only special investigators we're ever going to vote for, in consultation with that government, is to look into their whole operation over there on the other side and not just Ornge—special investigators to look at the whole Liberal issue.

He made a comment, a quote, and I'll actually read it back to you: "There's never a wrong time to do the right thing." Well, I would like to just throw the door open to those horses that they've slammed the door on and ask them to do the right thing in that issue. I'd ask them to reverse the decision on how they've done Ornge boondoggles. And let's talk about the gas plants, perhaps. Maybe they should actually, as my colleague says, fess up when they've messed up.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: You're right, my colleague from Renfrew—Pembroke—Nipissing. Did I get it? Whatever. It doesn't matter.

They need to come forward. There's another old quote that maybe they should listen to, and that is, "The truth will set you free." Maybe, as my colleague from Renfrew says, they should just actually apologize to the people who aren't getting the services because of all the money they're wasting.

Their exemplary service: Speaker, I would hate to see what would happen if they ever lowered the bar even further than what they have now. Their Liberal definition of moving forward, I think, means strapping horses to Ornge helicopters and sending the billion-dollar boondoggles off into the vaporous atmosphere.

Speaker, we need positive results. If we weren't wasting so much money, the people of Ontario would get better health care and better education.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Vaughan, because he's a fairly new member and we all want to hear the wit and wisdom that he has and is going to impart upon this House.

I listened to it, but I have to tell you, he talks about this new team that he's on—I think he was forgetting that he was on an old team which was identical to the new team—and he wants us to believe that this bill somehow is going to expunge all of the difficulties that the Liberal Party had in the last number of years.

Part of about being a guy who has been around here for a while—I've heard it before. I heard when the Premier before this one stood in his place and talked about how there was no difficulty at Ornge. I heard it before when the minister stood up and feigned that there was nothing at all. I remember George Smitherman standing here in his place and talking about how Dr. Mazza was one of the finest people in the entire province and how he was going to do great things at Ornge. We heard all of those things before.

You know, when you're a new guy, I guess, you have to think that you're going to be making some great, giant change. But these changes have only come about because this government got caught. And because they got caught and there was nowhere else to go, we have this piece of legislation.

When the legislation was introduced—if it was really, really important to the Liberals opposite, then why did they prorogue the House and kill it? They prorogued the House and killed this piece of legislation.

Now they've brought it back with a new statement that freedom of information is going to be put into the bill. My goodness. We've been using freedom of information for the last five or six years, trying to get at the bottom of this, and every single time, you and your colleagues around you have killed it. This is coming far too late—far too late—to convince me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise, to be given an opportunity to speak in support of Bill 11. I want to congratulate my colleague from Vaughan for his opening remarks in this debate.

I think I want to remind my colleague opposite, as well as my own colleagues here, of the fact that men and women across Ontario depend on this House to pass appropriate legislation. We know that men and women every day—the paramedics, the front-line workers and staff at Ornge, along with the pilots—are doing a great job. We want to recognize that. The other thing is that Ornge is moving forward, whether the opposition party agrees or not. This organization is moving forward on the right path.

Our government is committed to transparency, accountability and collaboration with our partners, whether the opposition party agrees or not. We have evidence that the proposed legislation will have transparency. We know that the new performance agreement will strengthen government oversight and ensure accountability. We also recognize that the proposed Bill 11, if passed, will ensure more transparency of executive salaries and expenses. Furthermore, it allows whistleblower legislation, because at the end of the day, I hear very attentively in the House that the opposition party wants to protect those who come forward with concerns. This proposed legislation will do that.

You can have all the faces across there. I can see your face, opposition member. You cannot deny that you're making faces at me. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, it is the right thing to do. You know I will be saying it because it is the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm proud to rise in response to the member from Vaughan. Unfortunately, I thought he was a new broom in the closet here, but from my understanding he was an EA of a former member from Vaughan, so he should be very much aware of the issues that have been going on in this House.

We have here legislation that is a remake of Bill 50, which some people called the red herring bill, not the orange herring. It just talks about how they're not interested in getting to the bottom of anything. We hear about the whistle-blowing legislation. If they were truly serious, we would have had the select committee that was talked about. They wouldn't have prorogued to get this off the table.

The contempt issue was our way of getting at information because freedom of information wasn't working. It took that contempt issue to finally force them to release documents. I guess it's the threat of going to jail that sometimes makes people reconsider their conviction on different issues. It shouldn't have to go there, and it shouldn't take the resignation of some of the ministers across who never acknowledged that there was an issue in the other files. But we see that here.

We see the Auditor General, we see the Ombudsman wanting to get involved and not being allowed to get involved in this issue. We hear a government that wants to get to the bottom, but we don't see the actions that would allow them to get to the bottom. We hear whistle-blowers who have come forth and been threatened with letters of lawsuits, firings and intimidation.

This is a record for this government that—

Mr. Paul Miller: Brutal.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It is brutal.

We're looking, as are the people of Ontario, to find out what happened here. Unfortunately, it's not just this file; it's many files. It's eHealth, it's the power plant issues. It just goes to speak of the waste that we've seen—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes the time questions and comments. We return to the member for Vaughan for his reply.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'd like to begin by thanking the members from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; Beaches–East York; my wonderful seatmate, the member from Scarborough–Agincourt; and the member from Storm–Dundas–South Glengarry for their comments.

It's interesting, Speaker: As I sat and listened very, very careful to what I heard from the members opposite, it struck me that they hadn't paid very much attention to much of what I had to say over the 20 minutes that I was up speaking. I say that because they seem very clearly, on that side of the House, to be only interested in looking backwards.

1520

The member from Beaches–East York talked about whether I'm part of a new team or not a new team. He clearly failed to hear that I wasn't talking about this government being a new team; I was talking about the new team that was in place at Ornge, the team that's performing as well as it is—those front-line workers, the 600 people and more who are doing a wonderful job; the new board of directors. It's clear to me that they would rather look backwards and try to dig up imaginary scandals and play that game instead of actually trying to move forward in conjunction with our Minister of Health and with our Premier and with our government so that we can make sure that we're continuing to deliver those kinds of results that I talked about.

I'm not quite sure about the communities that some of the members opposite represent. I know what's important to the people of my community. I know what's important to the people on this side of the House. And what's important to the people of my community and the people on this side of the House and their respective communities is that when we walk into this chamber, we try our very best to work together to come up with the kind of solutions that will deliver positive results for the people that we have been elected to serve. That's what this legislation does. It's what informs the work of our Minister of Health and our Premier and everyone on the government side of this House.

I would have thought—and I'm sure the women and men watching at home today would have thought—that with all of the positive steps that we're taking in this legislation, the members opposite would have gone past their own narrow partisanship and supported this legislation. They still have time to consider and to do so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 11?

Mr. Toby Barrett: While I do appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 11, the Ambulance Amendment Act, I want to point out that my opinion really hasn't changed from the previous bill, the pre-prorogation bill, Bill 50. What sticks in my mind: Meet the new bill, same as the old bill.

This government's duck-and-hide really has done nothing to change this new bill, this new proposed

legislation, from, in my view, nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to cover up for an unsupervised, government-paid free-for-all at Ornge air ambulance services, obviously putting patients' lives at risk and obviously costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

Before I go there, and after sitting for a number of months on the public accounts committee, I think it is important to turn the clock back and to take a look at what has happened, to follow the trail. I know there's been some criticism of looking back on what went wrong. I refer to this as evaluation, something that's very important to determine why there has been this lack of oversight, this lack of transparency, this lack of accountability.

If you go back to 1977, at that time Ontario established the helicopter and airplane base in what was called the aero-medical program associated with Sunnybrook. They contracted out with private operators, not only for aircraft, but for pilots, for paramedics. In 2005, this government, the Ministry of Health, announced it was appointing a not-for-profit Ontario air ambulance corporation, and it didn't take very long before this was re-named Ornge.

Health care in Ontario, and in this case specifically with respect to emergency services and air ambulance services, does have tremendous strengths, and none greater—and we've heard this many times over in this House—than the strengths of the dedicated, very highly trained paramedics, the doctors, the pilots and other professionals who essentially devote their lives to delivering care.

However, we've seen the challenges preventing these people, essentially, from fulfilling their responsibilities. Number one priority: Ensure the safe and timely transport of patients needing air ambulance, needing essential life-saving services.

What we have seen, if you look back at what has gone on at Ornge, is an insult to these volunteers, the professionals, the pilots and the paramedics—as I've said, those who do an excellent job, a job that was made only more difficult under, really, what became a rogue agency driven to expand, allowed to operate while this government and this Minister of Health failed to ensure that ever-important oversight function, failed to ensure that transparency was continuing, and failed in a very crucial management function: the function of control and accountability.

The minister had these powers with or without the new bill and with or without the old bill.

In 2006, the ministry committed to set and monitor standards to ensure that the "end result will be improved care, improved access to service, increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of service, and the assurance of greater fiscal and medical accountability." That sounds great when I read that statement. Yet, here we are today; we're debating a bill that the government claims will now give them the oversight powers. Speaker, these are powers they actually had all along.

Since 2006, Ontario's Auditor General has pointed out, while funding to Ornge for air ambulance had increased more than 20%, the number of patients served actually went down 6%. On land, Ornge received \$65 million to perform what's referred to as inter-facility land ambulance transfers. They projected these transfers at 20,000 annually. Ornge ended up only conducting about 15% of that projection.

Over five years, Ornge received \$730 million from the health ministry and they borrowed another \$300 million, with virtually no monitoring and no oversight. The \$300 million was borrowed to finance, among other things, the purchase of 12 new helicopters, 10 new airplanes and 11 used helicopters, as I understand, basically to kind of fill in until the new ones came on order. What do you do with 11 used helicopters once the new ones arrive?

Speaker, what's important here is that the minister had the power to stop this. She had the oversight capabilities to ensure that this sorry tale never commenced in the first place. This came up again and again during committee hearings on public accounts. If you take a look at the testimony on committee, you'll see many examples of officials confirming this government's oversight responsibilities, responsibilities they had all along.

I think of an exchange between Frank Klees, the member for Newmarket–Aurora, and the head of emergency services. Mr. Klees asked for any indication—he was referring to article 15 of the original performance agreement that was struck between Ornge and the Ministry of Health. He asked if this would relieve the Ministry of Health of its oversight responsibilities. Mr. Bates, the head of emergency services, was very clear: "I agree that the Ministry of Health and the emergency health services branch have and had oversight responsibilities and that oversight responsibility was basically set in line by the Ambulance Act, by the performance agreement and by the transfer-of-payment accountability directive."

We now realize that article 15 of that original performance agreement gave the Minister of Health powers of intervention, and yet we saw no intervention. We hear of more waste and more unaccountability from the minister as she presently argues for more powers. It's really a bit of a show-and-sham, Minister.

I think back to just last week at committee, where the replacement for Chris Mazza confirmed that Ornge air ambulance has gone in the red by \$2.5 million. This is according to Dr. Andrew McCallum. He's the president and chief executive officer of Ornge. Dr. McCallum commenced his duties on January 21, 2013, so he has been on the job eight or nine weeks now. During his testimony, Dr. McCallum talked about the challenges he's facing in turning things around. Number one, as he said: "The first challenge is that we need to focus our core businesses.... More than 60% of our transports occur north of Sudbury, and it's a responsibility we take very seriously." There is an evident "north-south divide that exists."

1530

I raised this in the House during a two-minute hit a couple of weeks ago: I'm reminded how important air

ambulance services are in southern Ontario. I represent the rural south. On March 6 at 9 a.m., our public accounts committee reconvened. This was after four months of prorogation. That very same day, at 9 a.m., an Ornge helicopter arrived just outside of my hometown of Port Dover. There had been a horrendous crash. A cement truck had rolled over a car. I know this because my daughter witnessed this. She was actually the only witness. She phoned 911. It had just happened. A land ambulance came along, taking a young patient to the hospital. They asked my daughter to sit in the ambulance with the patient. They ran down into the ditch to deal with this. Volunteers showed up. They ran down. Volunteer firefighters were on the scene within minutes. It's a very important service in the rural south.

I think of those volunteers on that road that morning, the good Samaritans, the professionals. They ran down there to do what they could. These people do not get very expensive speedboats. They do not have access to courtesy government taxpayers' money, Harley-Davidson motorcycles. They are there to try and do the right thing.

Dr. McCallum added, "The second challenge that we must meet this year is that we must refresh and update the strategic plan for the organization," and he indicated that "if one doesn't know where one is going, one won't get there." In this case, Dr. Mazza took this government on a bit of a trail somewhere that the taxpayers and the potential patients and clients of the service would not want to be.

And he added, "Our strategic plan will refocus our vision, mission, values and goals and objectives." Again, we have to go back; we have to do this armchair analysis, if you will, take a look at the previous planning process. Planning is part of management, and the lack of planning thereof is something we have certainly seen in this sorry tale.

Where was the Ministry of Health's vision, their mission, their values and goals and objectives, but most importantly, where was the action? Where was the oversight on this to ensure that those kinds of objectives were met?

Just to refer back to Dr. McCallum's presentation, "The final challenge," as he described it, "is our financial position, as it always is in the public sector. The transport of critically ill patients in the air and on land is, by its very nature, an expensive endeavour. On top of that, we are dealing with the implications of financial decisions made under previous leadership. While handling this situation will not be easy, we are fortunate that there are real opportunities to correct these problems."

Well, here's the problem, Speaker: Ornge is over budget. It's gone in the red, and now we discover they have handed out \$2 million in employee bonuses. Speaker, \$150 million a year flows into Ornge, as I've indicated, money that was wasted on Harley-Davidson choppers, a speedboat, kickbacks for helicopters not suited to conduct CPR. Now government is awarding employee bonuses of \$2 million, leading to a \$2.5-million deficit situation. So here we are. There's more

work to be done as a result of things that are going on virtually as we speak.

Given the history, I continue to state my concerns over how this bonus bailout, this deficit, will affect these crucial operations we're discussing today with our air ambulance service. How will that affect patient care? Where will the money be found? Will there be cutbacks in other essential services to pay for these bonuses?

CEO McCallum went on to testify before our committee about operational problems. For example, he referenced remedies to the lack of suitability of recently purchased aircraft for essential medical procedures. Again, we think of the CPR that could not be done on those helicopters, with the way the interior had been designed.

He told us, "We ... implemented the interim medical interior in our fleet of AW139 aircraft"—these are the AgustaWestlands—"and the process of finding a permanent solution is well under way." So in spite of what we might have heard today, that problem hasn't been fixed yet.

These are the same helicopters that Ornge ambulance purchased from AgustaWestland for \$144 million and, under an amendment, increased it to \$152 million. This was followed up and we learned of a \$6.7-million reported kickback to Ornge's "for-profit arm." I will point out that all of this is now part of an OPP investigation. I'd hope to refer to this shortly.

These helicopters were delivered. They were fraught with design issues, specifically concerning loading and unloading of patients, and concerns around patient care or patient safety concerns. The design issues specifically included, first of all, the height of the stretcher in the interior of the helicopter that the interior wasn't high enough to accommodate; secondly, the ability, or the inability, of paramedics to access and treat a patient, not only hampering CPR but advanced airway management, intubation and other procedures. Ornge went back to the manufacturer and advised them of the design problems. The firm claimed that the project was completed in accordance with the specifications provided by Ornge.

Again, how do these things happen? How do we end up with \$152 million worth of life-saving helicopters whose design itself impedes life-saving procedures?

Mr. Klees, my colleague from Newmarket-Aurora, referenced the vital design problems in reporting—he indicated to Dr. McCallum an accident that occurred July 17, 2011.

Again, Mr. Klees: "Upon arrival at scene of a motorcycle accident, the single primary care paramedic on board the helicopter informed local land EMS that due to the interior design of the Ornge helicopter, he would be unable to perform CPR on a patient. The patient 'was transported by land ambulance and died en route.'"

As Mr. Klees pointed out, "That interior that cost us millions of dollars was designed by an individual who is still on your staff"—referring to the CEO—"and had responsibility to oversee the design of those interiors."

Mr. Klees's question: "Have you ever had discussions with him about this issue and how he could have allowed that to happen?"

As to figuring out what went wrong, Dr. McCallum told us, "I've not gone backwards and said, 'Why did this happen the way it did?' Again, it's a valid question and it's early days for me, but it's something I will definitely be pursuing, because, as you correctly state, my most fundamental goal is to ensure that we don't make mistakes that cost people their life or limb, and we should do everything we can to minimize that possibility."

Again, Speaker, evidence of lack of oversight continues. I find it surprising; I find it really confusing. We learned last week that the Minister of Health has yet to even meet with Dr. McCallum. Just last week in committee, Dr. McCallum was asked, "How many times have you been asked to meet with the Minister of Health to receive a report and to discuss the progress ... being made" on these operational issues, these financial issues?

I quote Dr. McCallum: "With the minister to date in the eight short weeks I've been involved in the organization, I have not met with her yet regarding"—and Mr. Klees interjected: "I'm sorry?"

Dr. McCallum: "I have not met with her regarding the matters"—

Again, Klees interjecting: "She has never asked you to meet with her?"

Dr. McCallum responded: "Not to date."

Mr. Klees: "You see, that's disturbing to me, because one would have thought that, given the excuses that we've had over the last number of months from the minister, the reason that things were allowed to slide is because she didn't know about what was going on. She told us that she actually asked for meetings with Dr. Mazza and he didn't show up. I would have thought that one of the first priorities that she would have would be to have regular meetings with you to be briefed on the progress that you're making." So Dr. McCallum said that he did not have a meeting with the Minister of Health.

1540

I raised this issue in question period. I asked the health minister, first of all, "Do you know who's in charge here?"; adding "You have not met with the new CEO, Andrew McCallum. You never did meet with the old CEO, Chris Mazza." While I did query whether the minister was hiding behind the sofa or trying to sweep this under the carpet, the minister countered the committee testimony, indicating, "I have met with Mr. McCallum. In fact, I've seen him earlier this week."

This raises, again, yet another issue: Who do we believe? This kind of a sorry tale is not new in the tale of Ornge. Meet the new bill; it's really the same as the old bill. I don't think it's really going to accomplish very much, and it's going to require much more stringent measures than what we see before us today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up and speak to this bill, G11, the Ambulance Amendment Act.

I think it's important to start from a positive place in this debate. I think that if we say that, the provisions that mimic the Public Hospitals Act and the whistle-blower protection act may be of some value. Moving forward, I think that we've actually seen that there's a genuine need for whistle-blower protection in a number of agencies and organizations across the province. This is something that, I think, has some value.

That said, I think that this bill is being implemented after the fact, and it's unlikely that most of these new powers will be of any use at Ornge. Additionally, all of the provisions are aimed at the designated air ambulance provider, which is currently, obviously, Ornge, and would do nothing to prevent future scandals in other government-funded organizations.

Our health critic from Nickel Belt has been vigilant on this file, and she has shared serious concerns about the wide-reaching regulation-making powers that will allow the government to substantively change performance agreements without any consultation or negotiations. This has never been done before and could set a dangerous precedent.

It's been obvious, actually, from the beginning that this bill, in many respects, is a way to take a step backward and try to undo some of the damage. I think that there's a genuine concern that it's a public relations exercise.

Often, voices outside of this House have even greater weight. I think that when the Ontario Ombudsman, André Marin, expressed such strong concern around his office not having oversight over Ornge—I think that's a voice that we should be listening to; I think that's a credible source.

I think that, going forward, I have some serious concerns with this legislation, in that it will not necessarily prevent another scandal or truly meet the needs of Ontarians that have clearly been articulated from the public.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today and give some remarks based on the remarks that were recently given by the member from Haldimand-Norfolk. The previous speaker, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, I think started in a constructive vein, and that's what I think we all need to bring to this House on this piece of legislation.

Clearly, there were some things that have happened here that we wish hadn't happened. They happened on our watch, as a government, and we've brought forward now some measures that are going to try to rectify that. I think any government in its history will find that there will be times like this, where you find that a branch of government or an arm of government is doing something you would prefer they weren't doing, or you find out that something has happened that shouldn't have happened.

Certainly, people in Oakville—and, I can't help but think, people around the province of Ontario—how they sort of measure the effectiveness or the responsiveness of

a government is how they react after that: What do they do to ensure that this will never happen again? I think the Ambulance Amendment Act that's been put forward is a good start. I think it's a good starting point for debate. It's got to go through the committee system, obviously, but I would say that Ornge is now on the right track forward, that it's doing the things that were anticipated it would be doing when it was first put in place.

It is a fantastic organization. The people who work there are the people who arrive on the scene when you need them most. When you find yourself in a situation, either on the highway or at home or wherever the accident has taken place, or whether you're experiencing a health challenge, these are the people who arrive and these are the people who come and try to save your life, basically.

We need to ensure that this organization is running top-notch. This piece of legislation that's been put forward, I think, is worthy of the support of all members of the House because it does just that. Members may have their own opinions on what has happened in the past. We've heard that, and I respect some of that. I wish it hadn't happened. The fact is we're moving forward here. This piece of legislation deserves support from the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to rise today and comment for a couple of minutes on the remarks of my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk. I think he took us through a pretty good overview of what led up to the implementation of this bill. Like the member from Haldimand–Norfolk said, “Meet the new bill; same as the old bill.” He gave us a good explanation of why this legislation has been brought forward. I think a previous speaker from our party, our critic from Whitby–Oshawa, talked a lot about oversight and what the Ombudsman would like to see, and about involving him more and his office a lot more so that this type of scandal can't happen again in the future. As she said, and as Mr. Barrett, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, also referred to, the investigation is still ongoing, so how can you bring in any proper legislation until you know exactly what you're trying to correct?

They also touched on inadequacies of the oversight that was in place when this organization was first set up. It reminded me of my old role that I used to have in industry. We called it the six Ps: proper prior planning produces preferred products. Obviously, there was a lot of inadequacy placed on Ornge when it was first implemented, when it was allowed to run amok. The spending scandals and the scandals that the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and a number of other speakers have also commented on just allude to that.

I think, as was pointed out, Ombudsman oversight would certainly help. We need protection for whistleblowers. They talked about one individual at least who found his job terminated after he came and spoke, and I think that's a real injustice.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the rest of the afternoon and the rest of the debate on Bill 11.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to my colleague for the recognition.

Today we're debating Bill 11. As you are well aware, Speaker, we've been here before. There's a new number on this bill, but it's really identical to the bill that was introduced almost a year ago.

For four months the Legislature was shut down. There were four months of opportunity for people in the Ministry of Health and for legal counsel to go through this bill, respond to the comments that had been made in previous debates and improve on what was obviously a very hasty effort when it first came forward. One has to ask: In fact, did improvements get made? Did the lessons learned in debates that had been presented before prorogation get incorporated in this bill? I have to say, Speaker, and I have to say to everyone who is following this debate, no. We were left with the product that was put on the table before Dalton McGuinty shut down this House.

We're happy that Ornge is going to be brought under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and so subject to freedom-of-information requests. We called for this. We called for this the first time around and are obviously happy to hear that this essential transparency and accountability tool will apply to Ornge.

But there are a lot of other criticisms of this bill that weren't addressed. There was no movement on bringing forward Ombudsman oversight or making Ornge accessible to questions in committee here in the Legislature. Most importantly, the government didn't admit that they dropped the ball.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. I return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk to reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: This afternoon, as we debate this tangled web, we attempt to untangle the web. We do this on public accounts—there will be hearings again this week—and debate will continue in this House. I think we all realize that we can avoid and prevent the kind of waste we see here, literally billions of dollars of waste if you look at this issue and several other scandals before this House, but particularly with this failed, out-of-control agency, Ornge.

Some ideas have come forward just in the two-minute hits from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, the member from Oakville, of course the member from Sarnia–Lambton and the member from Toronto–Danforth. It's important that we continue to discuss this. Stay tuned: This discussion will continue for a considerable period of time into the future. We have to get this right. We have to not only identify the lack of oversight, the lack of transparency, the lack of accountability; we have

to come forward with measures for oversight and transparency and accountability.

The OPP investigation—a very significant investigation. We have been assured by Commissioner Lewis before our committee that if he comes up with evidence, if his officers come up with evidence, if there are charges to be laid, we will know that. One year from now, if there are not charges to be laid, he will certainly report back to this government, to the Ministry of Health.

This investigation is far from over, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been now more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I wish to inform the House that we wish to continue debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Toronto—Danforth.

Hon. John Milloy: I wanted to hear you.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the government House leader, whose appreciation of my oratorical skills apparently knows no bounds.

Speaker, I'm going to be drawing extensively on the commentary made by our health critic, France Gélinas, when she had the opportunity to discuss this a short while ago. She started off by saying that it felt like déjà vu all over again when she rose to address this bill.

People shouldn't be surprised by that. This bill has been tabled in the House before. Madame Gélinas went through it extensively, critiqued it extensively, and had mentioned at the time that it came through that the Auditor General had presented his report, a special report on an investigation into the value-for-money audits at Ornge in March 2012. The same day, the government responded with the Ambulance Amendment Act—the bill we're debating yet again this afternoon.

When that bill was first presented, it was very clear to our health critic that it was a bill that had been assembled in haste, a bill that was the result of a large amount of cutting and pasting on computers in the ministry. Ornge had been making headlines in the papers and the headlines of all the media non-stop since December 2011. It had been a frenzy of information, and much of that information damning and often proceeding to be more sensational in the latest reporting than the reporting that had gone before.

All of that showed clearly that the government had not succeeded in its basic function of oversight of that organization. That was utterly apparent. So the Ambulance Amendment Act was pulled together in haste and presented to this House. I note, Speaker, that even though it was assembled in haste, once again it's being presented in essentially the same form as it was presented in initially.

Right away, our health critic, France Gélinas, went through it and demonstrated the flaws in the bill. As she will say herself: Fair enough; that's the way the process works. Governments or private members bring forward bills. They have them debated in the House. Their weaknesses are subjected to scrutiny and, hopefully, to correction; their strengths are, hopefully, recognized. It goes through a first reading, a second reading, then goes to committee, and the hope is that when it goes to committee, when there's an opportunity for detailed debate on different elements, the bill is improved.

But frankly, our health critic finds that the improvements were not made. We were presented with a flawed bill back when it was originally put before this Legislature, and we are now again presented with the same flawed bill.

Our health critic was more than willing to be patient. She has worked in this field, in this area, for a long time, deeply drawn into the investigation of Ornge—a member who raised questions on this issue regularly. She felt, at the time when the bill was first introduced, "Let's see the process unfold. We'll make the bill stronger." That was in 2012. Speaker, we're now in March of 2013.

This place, this Legislature, was shut down—prologued—by the Premier for four months: an extraordinary opportunity. Suddenly all the time constraints, all the immediacy of having to get something out the door in a hurry, were gone. The Ministry of Health, senior officials, senior people in the legal department, had an opportunity to review the speeches that had been made, to listen to the suggestions from the official opposition, from us, the third party, and from backbenchers in the government, to take what had been put forward in a very hurried and very slapdash way and iron out the kinks, and to bring something forward that was far more substantial—and then, with a new and improved bill, an opportunity for debate to move things forward.

But, Speaker, even though the House was shut down, even though the immediacy of the day-to-day need to bring legislation to this chamber was set aside, improvements were not made. An opportunity was wasted. The same flawed bill that was presented in response to a media crisis is presented in this chamber a year later. Time that could have been used to actually address the weaknesses in the bill wasn't used. Suggestions that were made by the official opposition and that were made by the NDP were not reflected in this bill as it has been re-presented.

Madame Gélinas gives credit to the minister. She says she was very insistent that Ornge be open to freedom-to-information requests so the public could get at some information about what was going on. That hasn't happened yet. She's hopeful that the minister will move in that direction. On this, our critic gives the minister benefit of the doubt.

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She, our health critic, delved into why this bill was flawed. What she wants to do first is a from-the-treetop sort of view, a from-the-mountaintop view of what's

going on here. What she relates is that the ministry has said they didn't have the tools to deal with the crisis at Ornge, so what they're doing with this bill is giving themselves the tools. If you were to look at this and use different language, you could say the ministry was giving itself a stick so that they could apply some pressure to Ornge when it was behaving badly. What they have done with this bill is given themselves a larger stick to hit Ornge when it is not behaving the way it should behave.

The problem, Mr. Speaker, was never with the size of the stick. The problem was that the government didn't act. It did not act on warnings it was given from multiple sources. It didn't matter how many whistle-blowers went to them. It didn't matter how disturbing the stories were that were told. All of that was set aside. The fundamental problem was not lack of leverage on the part of the government but lack of attention. It didn't matter how many reports were submitted to the government. It didn't matter where the money was going. They refused to act. They had measures and tools they could have used.

We in the NDP had bureaucrats who came to us and say they were willing to and had put forward steps to bring back Ornge, but they were told not to. So it's not because this government didn't have leverage, that they didn't have the power and authority to bring Ornge into submission; it was that they refused to use the power they had. That is where the flaw, the failing, is found in all this.

Precisely why they didn't use those powers, that authority, the jury is out. Madame Gélinas has her own opinion, and I think there is a lot to recommend her analysis of what went on. She notes that the Liberals wanted this model of an air ambulance service. We've had air ambulance in Ontario since 1977. It's not a new service. Our health critic lives in northern Ontario. She looks after an area that is mainly rural. She has 33 communities in Nickel Belt, and most of them don't have ambulance services except for Ornge—except for air ambulance.

The service has been in place for many decades, but the Liberal government had this idea that they were going to privatize air ambulance service. They were going to allow air ambulance services to make money, to run like a business because, for some reason, running like a business is better than being accountable to the public. Speaker, we have seen problems coming up from this. In the energy field, we've seen it on a regular basis. We're seeing it now in the whole area of gambling and casinos, where this push to privatize OLG is leading—hopefully, in the minds of OLG leadership—to a proliferation of private gambling right across Ontario.

She says, "I don't know where these ideas come from," and I agree with her. But with Ornge, they failed miserably. It failed, and it has shaken the confidence in the air ambulance system of every single Ontarian. And that is a very substantial piece of damage, Mr. Speaker. When Ornge drives their ambulances in the riding of Madame Gélinas, people write messages in the dust on the sides of the ambulance. They're offensive messages,

because people are offended at how they have been taken advantage of, at how a public service has been twisted in the service of a few individuals.

The front-line workers, those who actually deal with individuals in life-and-death threatening situations, have to deal with public anger. That is not fair. They did not commit the errors. In fact, many of them tried to make this government and politicians in this chamber aware of what was going wrong. Unfortunately, this government didn't listen to them. Those men and women continued through difficult times to deliver as good a service as they could. When half the fleet was not staffed, when morale was in the basement, and when they could see the rot at the top of the organization, they tried hard to tell everybody, "Look at what's happening with this organization. Look at the top. Things are going wrong. Action is needed." This government did not listen until it burst into the headlines. Only at that point was any attention focused on the problems with our air ambulance system at Ornge.

So now we have a service that is constantly facing demoralizing and discrediting comments. It used to be that people were very proud of our air ambulance service; at the moment, they're not. They use the term as a commentary on corruption and on rot in government.

Speaker, our health critic, when she goes through these realities, asks, "If the government is given a bigger stick, do we really think this is going to build confidence?" She believes not—doesn't see it happening, not part of the program. The public doesn't care about how big a stick the minister has, because this government had the stick in the past and didn't use it. What they want is a change so that their interests and concerns, their complaints, are part of the equation. They want to make sure that if they see something going wrong, there will be a response; that if a whistle-blower comes forward, that he or she won't lose their job, and that the complaints and the dangers that they raise will be acted on. They want to be included in this.

How do you include people? How do you make them feel that they're included? The first step, obviously, Speaker, is to give jurisdiction to the Ombudsman. Who do people naturally turn to when they have a complaint about government services, when they feel that something is deeply wrong? Well, in fact, this government of Ontario, over a long period, has set up and supports an Ombudsman. They're there to hear complaints about government operations running badly, to shine a light on them so that those problems can be addressed. When the Ombudsman is contacted, investigates, comes back and says to people, "I'm sorry; I understand there's a problem here, but I don't have jurisdiction," that doesn't build confidence. People feel that events are out of their control—untouchable, unreachable. They expect for this kind of service that the Ombudsman's services will be available.

How else can people get involved? Through freedom of information, through access to information. If all those whistle-blowers, all those on the front lines and their

families, who knew things were wrong at the top had been able to file a freedom-of-information request, and had been able to get back the information, we would have had a very different set of events.

The NDP filed many freedom-of-information requests for Ornge, from 2009, 2010 and 2011. What kind of response did we get? We got nothing. We had been hearing about the problems; we had been raising those issues. We tried to get the data, the facts, the reality, through freedom of information—not available.

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We knew things were going wrong, but as we tried to get the proof—and frankly, Speaker, when you have seven whistle-blowers from seven different parts of the province coming to you, it's a pretty good indicator that there's something big going wrong. You can see that there's truth to the story. But when you dig in and you're denied information, using freedom-of-information access, when the Ombudsman is ruled out because he doesn't have jurisdiction, then people start understanding that they're up against a brick wall, that there's an agency, a part of the government, that they can't access that clearly is operating outside of all control and authority.

We tried to get this information in the committee hearings called estimates. For those who aren't familiar with them, every ministry, every year, can be called before a committee to justify its spending. The estimates committee: a tough committee; a tough committee for the ministers who come before it; tough for those who are trying to get answers.

We put forward questions and we tried to get answers in estimates. We didn't get anything back, Speaker. The Ombudsman had no jurisdiction; freedom of information returned no answers; and when we went after the ministry in the estimates committee—one of the checks and balances in a democratic system—that wasn't available either.

That, for our health critic, was quite unusual. She had been an MPP for about five years. In estimates, you don't get all the information you want, but generally speaking, you can get a fair amount of information. Ministers are there; bureaucrats are there. You have to press hard; you have to be persistent. Sometimes you have to be noxious, but you can get information—except on this matter. None of our questions in estimates were answered—not one. Months went by; years went by. It didn't matter that the Clerk of this assembly tried to get the answers for us. They were not forthcoming.

Speaker, we need better than government-by-headline. This legislation needs to be amended profoundly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Toronto—Danforth and have a couple of minutes this afternoon on the Ambulance Amendment Act, 2013.

First, perhaps, just a quick comment on the theme that has been percolating through to the surface in the conversations, primarily from the opposition, when it comes to

the issues of prorogation relative to legislation that's in the Legislature, and the idea that's trying to be put forward that we've been prorogued for four months: I think it's fair to remind the viewing public that in fact the prorogation affected 14 or 16 sitting days. As I've said more than a couple of times in my home community of Thunder Bay, I'm more than happy to compare the records of this Liberal government over the last nine and a half years when it comes to how many sessional days have been sat, as compared to the previous two governments when they were in power. I'm happy to do that.

But I do want to speak more specifically a bit to the bill. We do know that there were some very serious issues that arose at Ornge. I think ultimately what the government will be judged on is how they responded to those issues. When people misuse public funds, when they conduct themselves in a way that is not in keeping with what is expected by the public, I think it's appropriate and it's expected that the government responds in a very serious way.

I'm not sure how much more significant a response you can make as a government—beyond legislatively bringing in measures that, hopefully, will mitigate or prevent it from happening again in the future—than by calling in the Ontario Provincial Police to conduct an investigation. We've done that. That investigation is ongoing.

We have retroactively brought freedom of information and transparency to this particular file. Between those two things, I'm not sure how much clearer a response we can give to the public that we're very serious about what's going on there and that we're trying to do everything that we can to see it doesn't happen again. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I comment on the presentation by the member from Toronto—Danforth. I will mention, as a member of public accounts, that there are two MPPs from the NDP who are members of that committee: the member for Nickel Belt and the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton. I think everyone in this House is aware of the contribution of the member from Newmarket—Aurora. The committee is chaired by the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

If anyone here thinks that this story is over, they would be wrong. This past week we heard testimony from OPP Commissioner Chris Lewis, who indicated that if charges are warranted, if there is evidentiary reason, we will hear about it 12 months from now. This is far from over, this issue, and that's the way it should be. We will be hearing more testimony this coming week.

Our OPP commissioner: I found his presentation reassuring. He indicated the investigation is under way. It's under the direction of a detective-inspector from the criminal investigation branch. This is a major case manager. He's heading up a team of investigators from the OPP's anti-rackets branch, the corruption unit, which includes a forensic chartered accountant. They're bring-

ing in additional investigators from the anti-rackets branch to supplement, and they have conducted interviews with more than 50 people to date. They've taken a look at 22,000 pages of documents and more than 500,000 emails.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think that this is a really interesting debate because it actually illustrates how differently we see this bill, G11. I think the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan has said, “You know, we’ve taken some measures to try to make some changes, and I don’t know what else you expect.” It think that it’s reasonable for us to expect measures that actually are going to work. To date, we haven’t seen that in G11.

One thing, though, that I’m very supportive of—our whole party is—is the whistle-blower protection. We’ve seen it; we’ve seen, actually, case after case across the province of front-line workers who have the lived experience in situations of high crisis and high stress, and they’ve come forward. They’ve tried to tell the powers that be the truth. Actually, their argument is solely around patient safety, and those people haven’t been listening.

My colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane had illustrated last week nine health care workers who have come forward, raised their concerns and thus are now in a court situation, and the taxpayers are on the hook for that. I think that whistle-blower protection is a good learning lesson that’s contained within G11. I think that our basic concerns around this piece of legislation, though, have to do with basic transparency measures. Ornge will still not be subject to Ombudsman oversight. Things do go wrong in the field and I think that the clients, the patients, the citizens of this province, should have a clear recourse to face some of those issues and concerns that they’ve had. Without Ombudsman oversight I fail to see how they’re going to have a clear path to justice in many cases. So we still have very serious concerns with regard to G11.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I didn’t have the opportunity to sit on public accounts, but I’ve heard and I said in the past that we have, on the front line, very dedicated employees that work there. They are the pilots, they are the paramedics, they are the doctors, they are the receiving hospitals, and I must congratulate them for all the good work that they have done.

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But again, I’m saying the past management of Ornge have failed all of us, and we’re very sad about that, because a lot of public money went into it. But what I’m pleased about is to see what the Minister of Health has put forward to try to correct these situations. I feel that Ornge is well into a new chapter and is on the right track, the right path forward, under the new leadership.

I have all the confidence in the new leadership and especially in the new CEO, Dr. Andrew McCallum. I had the opportunity to work with him for more than 14

months. I could see his dedication and management style and his willingness to improve the situation at Ornge. I was at his going-away party, and I told him that he was a very brave man to take over, but he has all the confidence that he is able to put Ornge on the right track.

We need this service, because as I said before, patients that go onto these helicopters are not in the best shape, so we need to make sure that we have all the safety and all the best-qualified people to take care of them. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): And now we return to the member for Toronto–Danforth for his two-minute response.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the members who stood to speak: the members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Haldimand–Norfolk, Kitchener–Waterloo, and the Minister of Community Safety.

Speaker, a few things: First, the fact that this government prorogued the Legislature for four months was, in and of itself, a huge insult to the people of the province. But beyond that, to have not taken that opportunity to pull together the suggestions for improvement in this bill, so that what we have before us reflects the arguments and the analysis that was put forward previously in this chamber, is irresponsible. Time was wasted, time that could have addressed shortcomings in this bill so that what we were debating here today and in the days to come would be of greater consequence for Ontario as a whole.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk is correct: This matter is not over. My understanding is that public accounts is now writing a report on what they found. The OPP is still investigating. This bill should take the best that comes out of the public accounts report, should have taken into account the analysis that was put forward previously, and will need to be amended when it gets to committee.

I thank the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. Again, she emphasized the need for the Ombudsman’s oversight. Let’s face facts: There will be governments for decades to come in this province who will deal with a different nature of problems, different kinds of problems. Having given the Ombudsman oversight is another layer of defence for the public in ensuring that when things are going wrong, no matter which government it is, that those issues can be addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I’m pleased to recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much, Speaker. I’m pleased to address Bill 11. I think the last time I was speaking about this, it was Bill 55. Perhaps it would be useful to start with what, to me, are a couple of the really significant things that are in this bill.

First of all, because Ornge is governed under the Ambulance Act—and for the most part, ambulance services in Ontario are run by municipalities and therefore sort of the management ultimately is subsumed by the Municipal Act—there was no authority for the Ontario government to appoint a supervisor. We have lan-

guage in the Education Act, the Municipal Act, the Public Health Act—various other acts, in fact—that allows the provincial government to step in.

The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound questioned why one would have a special investigator. In exceptional circumstances, in all these acts, the first step is for the minister to appoint a special investigator, who looks into the situation, reports back to the minister, and if the investigation shows it is warranted, allows the minister to then go on and appoint a supervisor, which, *de facto*, means that the supervisor, and through the supervisor the minister, takes over the operation of whatever service it is. So to bring the air ambulance act with respect to Ornge into that parallel with hospitals, for example, is very important because it provides the minister with a power the minister never had with respect to Ornge.

The other thing that it does is it specifically allows, in the performance agreement, for the government to actually change the performance agreement. There was no legislative authority to do that before. In various health sectors where there are transfer agreements with various other health partners, the minister already has that authority to change the performance agreement as situations come to light. That was never the case with Ornge. This legislation provides that authority for the minister to change the performance agreement when there is clearly a problem with the existing performance agreement.

Those are two very important things which Bill 11, the current version, has in common with Bill 55, the previous version.

But I think it's important that we not think that nothing has happened in the intervening year. When we stood here a year ago, I talked about this bill as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care at that time. A lot has happened in that intervening year. We've heard a lot of testimony. We've learned the extent to which there was a deliberate setting up at Ornge by the then CEO, Dr. Mazza, of a corporate structure which was designed, quite frankly and deliberately, to take money from the public purse and transfer it through for-profit corporations into private pockets. That whole understanding of what was going on there has been frightening, I would say, and it's certainly very, very disturbing that a public service would be doing this.

An interesting transition in the testimony of the old board, from the first appearance of the original chair to the second appearance—where it went from a defence and claim of full knowledge of all activities on the first appearance, to a second appearance where the original board chair admitted, in fact, that there were payments going to Dr. Mazza which he knew nothing about and which the board had never authorized. That was information that has come to light.

We learned that the lawyer who set up the original performance agreement, Lynne Golding, who was the wife of the then Minister of Health, Tony Clement—we

found, when we looked at the legal billings, that as far back as the winter of 2003, Dr. Mazza, before this corporation was even set up, was seeking legal advice on what you actually had to reveal on the sunshine list and what you could park off the sunshine list. You could see that from the billings. You could see from the billings that Dr. Mazza, before this was even set up, was seeking legal advice on corporate structures and how you could set it up in various ways, which we unfortunately eventually saw come to pass. We found out that the performance agreement as originally drafted by Lynne Golding's law firm in fact gave Ornge veto power over any changes that the Ministry of Health requested in the performance agreement. That was the bad stuff that we found out.

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In the meantime, there have been a lot of good things going on at Ornge. As my colleague mentioned, Dr. Andrew McCallum has been appointed as the permanent CEO of Ornge. What's important about that is that, yes, he brings the experience as the chief coroner of Ontario and obviously knows a lot about emergency medicine and emergency management, but he's also trained as a military flight surgeon, which means that, for the first time, we have as the CEO somebody who has both medical emergency and flight training, all in the context of the practical applications of flight to medicine. That's an important first.

When we look at some of the issues that came to light, we heard a lot about problems in the Thunder Bay and northern Ontario area. As a result of that testimony, Ornge has taken steps to introduce a third line of paramedics at the Thunder Bay base to make sure there really is 24/7 service in northwestern Ontario—a big improvement of service.

We heard over and over again, and this was highlighted in the auditor's report as well, about the training level of the paramedics, were they really advanced-care paramedics? A lot of the front-line paramedics told us with great frustration that they had taken a lot of courses in the way of moving from basic standard to advanced-care paramedic but they couldn't get time from Ornge to complete the training. The training has been revamped so that people actually can get that training to upgrade to advanced-care paramedic, which means that the training of the crews has dramatically improved over the last year because, in fact, the training has improved.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The money's not going to pay for trips and vacations.

Hon. Liz Sandals: It's not going for trips and powerboats anymore. It's going to actual flight training or paramedic training.

One of the things we heard about in testimony was whether or not the helicopters and planes were licensed to fly into the US when that was necessary. Over the intervening time, the Federal Aviation Administration—the FAA—in the United States has approved Ornge for helicopter flights into the United States to transport patients to and from US destinations.

Interestingly, this wasn't just an issue of the new helicopters. What's come to light is that under the old way of

doing things, the helicopters never were licensed to go into the US. That's something new that has been improved and is now a service to people all over Ontario.

As a result of these improvements—and these are all areas on which the Auditor General commented in his original report—this is the latest data: From October to December 2012, Ornge air crews and aircraft were available to respond to calls 97% and 97.3% of the time respectively—way up in performance; 93% of the calls Ornge receives are for transport between facilities, and 96% of these calls were confirmed within 20 minutes—way up; 7% of Ornge calls are scene calls—that's the emergency stuff that we think of. Currently, 90% of these calls are confirmed within 10 minutes—performance way up. So Ornge is now a first-class air ambulance system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand up and offer some comment; I don't even know where to start, really, in two minutes. But, you know, a couple of times I heard from the minister, "It's not going to trips and boats anymore." Well, why did it ever go there? Who was looking after this? Who was paying attention? People are going without hip surgery, they're going without doctors, they're going without front-line care, and yet you're saying "not anymore" about the boats. You're probably going to tell us there are no more hidden helicopters in hangars, but I think there might be out there.

Where was the oversight? Will that money be paid back by anyone? The deputy minister involved received a raise despite all of this going on, Minister. I didn't hear too much about any of those pieces.

Why does this bill not want the Ombudsman involved? You want to build in yet another layer of bureaucracy but you don't want the Ombudsman, who has jurisdiction over many, many, many other organizations, and yet it's all—you just don't want it. That raises flags all over the place—orange flags, red flags. It just makes me very, very nervous.

You gave Dr. Mazza personal loans. Where was the oversight there? I'm very concerned about all this. You talked about Dr. McCallum. It's passing strange that you take someone who was the chief coroner when there were investigations going on and you move him in to the CEO. Is that kind of not putting him right in the headlights, as a deer, of this whole investigation? It's very strange that you just want to be able to deflect everything around you. Mazza was under the bus. I think Dr. McCallum better be very nervous, because if we start getting closer—and we will in these committee hearings—we'll finally get to more of the truth and more of it will come out, and then we'll throw him under the bus. It's just very disheartening.

We would have thought that there would have been a lot more accountability and a lot more transparency built into this bill; there's nothing there. There need to be a lot of amendments before we would ever consider it. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Minister of Education raised some concerns and some issues. I think it's also important for us to recognize that a piece of legislation doesn't take the place of a government's responsibility. Regardless of what legislation exists, the government always has a responsibility to ensure that every dollar that is publicly derived from our taxpayers is spent efficiently and properly, with the right oversight.

There is ample evidence in the committee that there were a number of red flags that occurred for years and years that were not given attention, not responded to. In fact, the NDP had asked questions regarding the salaries, which were the key to unlocking the scandal in Ornge. Those questions were asked years and years ago in estimates committee by the NDP.

Whistle-blowers had contacted the ministry raising concerns about what was going on at Ornge. The corporate structure, in all its complexity, was disclosed to the government, including the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health and various other ministries were briefed specifically regarding the for-profit and the not-for-profit structures. Meyers Norris Penny conducted an audit that flagged many of the same issues that the Auditor General flagged. So the issue is that while we may bring a bill forward that may have some improvements, it doesn't have the Ombudsman oversight that we'd like. But it doesn't nullify the fact that the government has a Responsibility. If you're paying the bill for any transfer agency, you must oversee that agency, make sure they're doing the right job. There is ample evidence that the ministry simply did not do their job, did not oversee Ornge, did not provide that oversight that they have a responsibility to do. And that's really the problem, because there may be a number of Ornges going on across Ontario still, and we need to ensure there is oversight over those as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I think the member from Guelph, the Minister of Education, certainly got on the record today with regard to the important elements of Bill 11, the air ambulance act of the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, there's no way of getting around this: The government of Ontario put trust in a number of people throughout this organization, and those people fundamentally betrayed that trust. When that happens, no government oversight is going to—if people decide that they're going to break that important sense of trust, that's going to happen.

But having dealt with that in terms of we put a lot of new people in place—we hired Dr. Andrew McCallum as president and chief executive officer, a man of impeccable integrity. He's trained as a military flight surgeon; former chief coroner of the province of Ontario. Any talk about throwing this individual under the bus is just absurd; it really is. That says a lot in terms of this gentleman and his impeccable integrity.

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We have a new board of directors in place—Ian Delaney, who has a distinguished record in corporate Canada with Sherritt International. We have appointed a quality-of-care committee under the direction of Dr. Barry McLellan, president and chief executive officer of Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, another individual of impeccable integrity.

We're turning this ship around. It's a lot like eHealth. There was a report the other day about eHealth: Nine million Ontarians are now hooked up to eHealth in the province of Ontario. It's moving forward, a great success, and there will be individuals within this chamber that will take advantage of eHealth in the months and years to come.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has taken the appropriate action. We're turning the ship around, and it's going to benefit patients in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I have been listening to the debate this afternoon, and there seems to be a lot of congratulations on the other side of the House: "Don't worry; everything's been taken care of. This bill will fix the mess at Ornge, which we didn't know anything about in the first place."

Well, to begin with, they either knew or should have known that there were problems at Ornge long before they surfaced. Secondly, as I stated during my remarks a little earlier this afternoon, how can you possibly fix something when you don't actually know what the problem is? It goes back to that. This is just a very hasty, cobbled-together piece of legislation that attempts to deal with some of the problems that they think exist. But it's not comprehensive, because we haven't completed the testimony from witnesses in public accounts; there are many more people that wish to be heard on this subject, and we need to make sure that we hear from all relevant parties, because there has been some pretty startling testimony that's come out from what we've heard so far.

We need to make sure that all of the witnesses who do come forward come forward in a sense that they won't be reprimanded or suspended, as we saw with one of the helicopter pilots—sorry, a fixed-wing pilot who appeared before the committee earlier on. We need to make sure that they can come forward, give their evidence clearly and not be worried that there are going to be repercussions.

We need to make sure that the bill actually responds to the real issues here. We've heard from the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman feels very strongly that his office should be involved in the investigation of any kinds of complaints and that it's not going to be enough to have these special investigators that are going to be appointed by the Minister of Health because, in fact, they are going to report right back to the minister's office. It's hardly the kind of independent oversight that we need to find in any investigations of any complaints here. The Ombudsman

stated it, and most of the parties here, except for the Liberal members, have reiterated the need for independent oversight. Again, I can't stress strongly enough that we need to make sure the Ombudsman has the ability to intervene here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the Minister of Education for her two-minute reply.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to thank the members for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Bramalea-Gore-Malton, the Minister of Rural Affairs and the member for Whitby-Oshawa for their comments.

I must say that I'm a little bit confused by some of what I hear from the opposition. On the one hand, I hear, "You should have fixed it sooner." On the other hand, I hear, "This bill is premature, because you should wait until the public accounts committee writes its report." From what I understand, the public accounts committee is still hearing witnesses; I don't know what their schedule is for completing their report, but you can't have it both ways, folks. You can't say, "You should have fixed it yesterday," and, "Wait for the report," because those two things are not consistent messages.

The other thing that I find very disturbing is a senior civil servant of the highest integrity like Dr. McCallum, who has done nothing but serve this province with great dedication, skill and integrity over the course of his career—to have this threat from the official opposition that their goal is to throw Dr. McCallum under the bus. And I quote, from Hansard, that they're going to throw Dr. McCallum "under the bus." That is totally unacceptable, for a civil servant of the greatest integrity; I reject that attitude totally.

We agree with you that what Dr. Mazza did is unforgivable; it is getting fixed. Minister Matthews has shown extraordinary leadership in getting Ornge back to the service it needs to be for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate? I recognize the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I just want to clarify, before I start my formal remarks, that the last speaker—I just want to clarify, first and foremost: You're in the market of throwing people under the buses. Let's talk Bentley. Let's talk Chris Mazza. He was the expert; he was the shining star. But he's no good now; it was all his fault.

A further point of clarification: What we were trying to say is, if you didn't make so many mistakes, if you didn't make these boondoggles, you wouldn't have to have these worthless pieces of bills to come to the table, to be wasting our time. We'd be talking about more things.

Now I'm going to move into just a little bit of history on this and why this bill is even having to be at the table.

There's a \$700-million cost to the taxpayers of Ontario; there's money wasted. I think we admitted that we're not going to waste money on boats and trips—"anymore" being the key word—motorcycles, and helicopters that you can't do CPR in. So we'll just set the

tone there a little bit, that if you hadn't created this boondoggle, you wouldn't have to be confused about what we're asking you to do.

That money could have been, and should be, going to front-line health care. It should be going to people for their operations, for testing, for doctors, for nurses, for X-rays. It shouldn't be being wasted on all of these other things.

It's very interesting. My colleague from Newmarket—Aurora, I believe, in his original remarks on this—and I'm going to just quote a little bit from what he said: "The Ornge air ambulance scandal is a textbook example of why people are cynical about politics ... politicians ... bureaucrats and the role of the private sector in delivering public services." And he's absolutely right.

You know what? It sometimes makes me wonder if maybe that coalition of the NDP hadn't been involved—because they are deathly against any of these corporations making profits as well—although I'd like to check sometime to see if they accept any donations from these horrible, horrible corporations that make profit.

As the Speaker keeps saying and the Premier keeps saying, we need to rise with the ship. Well, if we didn't have to be dealing with all of this poor management—poor lack of management—we would be talking about more positive things, because we'd be giving the services to the people that they deserve.

We need to be talking about how Ornge is, and continues to be, dysfunctional. They talk about this new board, but it's kind of like talking about a new government that keeps doing the same things. We keep not getting information. We keep being swept under the carpet, it seems. "Oh, just forget the past. Forget the past. Let's move forward." Well, you know what? That's not the appropriate role of the opposition. We need to hold them to account. We need to get the truth for the taxpayers of Ontario. That is exactly what our job is, and we will not ever flinch from doing that. We will stand solid, to ensure that we always are asking the hard-hitting questions, because that's the taxpayers' money that they are wasting on the opposite side.

It seems almost that this failure of the minister, the failure of the deputy minister, the failure of the bureaucrats—that they just want to divert attention from this. We need to have clearly defined responsibility of the minister. She keeps saying that now this new act is going to give her the powers that she needed. It's unequivocally clear from day one, from the Auditor General, that she always had the ability to stand up and do it. She should have had the oversight.

The Minister of Education referenced that there will be no more boats and flights and all this other stuff. Why did that happen in the first place, if the minister was truly paying attention and was on top of the file? Where was the deputy minister, if the minister was too busy? Where were all that myriad of bureaucrats? Someone should have stepped up. But you know what? There probably were people in the bureaucracy that want to step up, but they knew that they'd throw them under the bus, because there is no whistle-blower protection for that.

This originally came to us as Bill 50. There was extensive debate and input. They did not incorporate a single one of those changes into this version. They're either blind to the problems, they refuse to see them, or they're complicit, and I'll leave it to the House and the people watching at home to decide which that is.

At the end of the day, we can't continue to just say, "Sorry, we messed up again. We'll do better next time. We'll raise the bar." We need to ensure—this bill needs to ensure—that we go down to the very deepest level to understand how it happened, so that we can correct it and prevent it from ever happening again.

The biggest part of this bill should be about accountability; it has not been addressed. The Liberals have failed in their oversight responsibilities. We still have not received any form of an apology to the people of Ontario for the money that's been wasted and the services they're not getting.

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The bill should be giving oversight to the Ombudsman. Why do they refuse? Why will they not even accept even a glint of giving this to the Ombudsman? I think for 500 other agencies, he has the ability to look into and provide oversight, an arm's-length critique and understanding of that. No, they want to have—unfortunately, typical of the opposite side—another layer in this. They want to put in special investigators that would report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I'm not certain how that's going to work, particularly when these whistle-blowers have gotten thrown under the bus before.

They want to put in an office of the patient advocate and in there somewhere they said it's so they can receive the compliments. Well, I'm not certain, if I've read any of this file correctly, that they're going to be getting much in the way of compliments, considering that you can't do CPR in the helicopter that they custom-designed for Ornge.

I'm just not certain why we would build all of this in. Why would they just not fess up, step up and take responsibility for their actions on how poorly they did this? It should have been the first amendment to this bill; they should have been giving the Ombudsman arm's length, from the government, the ability to have oversight for this.

We should note that, again, the original Bill 50 and all associated time and resources were wasted when Dalton McGuinty prorogued for partisan reasons. We wouldn't even be having this discussion, perhaps, if we'd have been there and, again, if we'd have gone right back and designed this organization properly.

You know, there's lack of oversight; there's lack of accountability. What happened to Deputy Minister Saad Rafi? No repercussions. All of this has happened. They're somewhat, I think, now trying to now admit a little bit that there have been some things they could have done a lot better, but he got a raise. Speaker, that's going in the wrong direction—someone who didn't take accountability, who didn't step up, who actually didn't step forward and apologize. The right thing to do would

probably have been to resign; they award him with a raise. It's just not right.

I move on to kind of the transparency that I'm concerned about, or lack thereof, with this bill. They want, again, as I mentioned earlier, to put in special investigators who would answer to the Minister of Health. Why do we need more special investigators? Why do we need more special investigators if it's properly thought out, properly planned and you give your staff the due diligence to do their job properly and you put whistleblower protection in that actually allows those people that see things going wrong to step out without fear of recrimination?

Speaker, it's unbelievable. The Auditor General's report did not suggest in there—he did not say we want a new bureaucracy of special investigators. He did not say to create another layer of bureaucracy. Why are we going down this path? Why don't we just actually step up, give the proper reasons for what has gone wrong, admit your mistakes and work with us? We keep hearing every day in this House, “We want to reach out. We want to work with people. We want to do the right thing.” Well, here's an opportunity again.

You know, it really makes me sad that at the end of the day we continue to go through all of these discussions in here and yet the same things happen over and over and over again. We hear the same old thing: “We're sorry. We can do better. The bar is raised.” They talk about all the flowery stuff that they're doing so well, but really let's get down to the facts of the \$700 million that's wasted. There's no accountability. No one has stepped up yet and said, “You know what? We totally messed up.” They keep telling us we've got a new board—self-appointed star again. But I think Dr. Mazza was supposed to be their shining star originally. I can't understand why they would ever spend \$10 million on an insurance policy, but they did, and, at one point, a \$4-million salary.

This is typically, again, a bill that they bring to this Legislature that is all fluff and stuff. There's nothing there that really actually makes the minister stand up and take accountability. She even, in this document, says, “I need the ability to do that.” You've had the ability, Minister, from day one. You did not step up. You still have your deputy minister. You gave him a raise. Minister, you have to take accountability; you have to do the right thing. I think my colleague, who is not here today—Mr. Milligan—says, “Do the honourable thing, Minister.” You need to step up and take that accountability. You need to not just keep sweeping it under.

Some of our colleagues today in this discussion have kept saying, “We just need to move forward. We just need to move forward.” Well, you know, you can't move forward unless you understand how you've messed up so badly in the past so that you can put practical ideas in to prevent that from ever happening again.

This Ornge boondoggle is an absolute nightmare for the people of Ontario. It's impacted our health care. It definitely has impacted the services that people on the

front lines are getting. It's impacted the morale of the staff within the air ambulance. You know, it really actually hurts me to say this, but it's sad that the people have lost trust. It's sad that it's actually added to the cynicism because rather than actually stepping up and saying, “We absolutely messed this one up. We need to actually open the door to you to make those revisions and really get to the bottom of this,” and giving us all the documents, similar to the gas plant fiasco, all we get is deflection, diversion and more of these fluffy papers that really aren't worth the paper they're written on. We need to ensure that we have accountability, we have transparency and we have a government that truly is going to step up and say sorry to the people of Ontario.

Yes, you need to do better. We will do better, but at the end of the day you should have just done it right in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I actually agree with many of the comments made by my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. One of the points he brings up which I think is quite salient is: What was the government doing when this was all occurring anyway? What does this bill actually do? Does this bill actually provide anything useful?

In fact, if you look at all the changes that happened at Ornge—the changing of the board, the new CEO, the oversight that's going on right now—all of this occurred without introducing a new bill. So all the changes that have occurred in Ornge have actually occurred right now—the new CEO, the new board, the new performance agreement, the oversight mechanisms that are now in place—without a new bill being put in place.

I'll argue that the bill actually has no benefit. In fact, if you look at it, the current CEO indicated that the bill wouldn't change anything that he's doing, that if we introduced this bill, if this bill was passed, it wouldn't change anything that he's not already doing. He would still continue to have contact with the ministry regularly. He would still continue to report and provide information. The board would continue with their mandate. Nothing would change.

What I wanted to see, what I had hoped to see, is a mechanism that would be applied government-wide, a simple oversight mechanism that would be applied government-wide. One of the easiest mechanisms is this: Every transfer payment agency that the government provides money to should provide salary disclosure, a simple oversight mechanism. In this case, when we asked for the salary of Dr. Mazza, we weren't provided with an answer. That should have been the immediate flag. Every agency that is funded by the ministry, that is funded by the government, should disclose the salaries of all their employees. That's a starting point.

Second, regular contact could have avoided this by overseeing that industry. By having regular contact, we could have avoided this in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I compliment the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on his comments. First of all, as this was all unravelling with the Ornge issues and that, I actually had an acute care paramedic come to me. I hope this can apply, as we move forward with this legislation and we look for whistle-blower protection, to all people in the public service. This gentleman is a good employee. He knows what he's doing, and he's got a lot of experience in his job. He was terrified to even talk to me, but I know that he and some of his colleagues were wanting to get this information to the appropriate people to draw attention to the problem. He wouldn't meet me at his home, and he wouldn't meet me at my office. So I had to meet him 75 miles away in a coffee shop where he gave me a bunch of background information and materials etc. and explained exactly what we're hearing, what has actually unravelled here.

My comments here are meant to always protect those kinds of people. He told me there were millions of dollars being wasted. He told me that they were the wrong ambulances for the job, that you couldn't get a stretcher properly into the actual ambulance. What I really want to hear, when this is all done—and I know we're parties talking on each side of the House here about our different views, but I hope that people like that in the public service can always be protected, because those kinds of people brought this to our attention and in the end will probably save millions of dollars if Mr. Mazza and his group of people would have continued on into the future. But this particular gentleman was terrified to even approach me because he was so sure he would lose his job if he ever got caught.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Very good points. I think there was a genuine effort on behalf of everyone in this House to make their points around the accountability piece.

I think the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton has sort of hit the nail on the head: Certain things had already been put in place before the bill was before the House. So really, why are we actually even debating this if not just for a public relations exercise?

Once again I'll say that our main concerns have to do with transparency, because Ornge is still not subject to the Ombudsman—this is a very simple thing—and because Ornge will still not be able to be called to public accounts, or any other government agency, for that matter.

We still haven't got a good reason for why. Why would you not put these measures in place to actually make Bill 11 effective? What reasons can the government give for their reluctance to take these easy and cost-free steps? At this point, we haven't seen any reason. We have seen no rationale.

I think that for a lot of us there are more questions than answers at this point in time, and the bill as it's presented doesn't provide clarity.

I'll go back once again to what the Ombudsman said. He has expressed strong concern that his office will

continue not to have oversight over Ornge. He has said that without this oversight there would be “no credible accountability.”

The patient advocate role reports to Ornge's vice-president, not to the public or even to the board of directors.

We have a serious credibility issue here, and we have a serious trust issue here. This is a missed opportunity, as it's presented, to actually restore some of that trust. I think the people of this province deserve greater clarity, and they deserve to have a service that is actually going to meet their needs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: I have listened intently to the debate this afternoon. I think the first point we should be putting on the record is the fast action of our Minister of Health in terms of dealing with the situation at Ornge. All of us were troubled and, obviously, continue to be troubled with the things that went on at Ornge. I want to give her credit for coming forward with a very specific action plan: a new performance agreement with Ornge.

No minister wants to do this, but she took the action of calling in the OPP. We had the Auditor General, who looked into the Ornge situation. We also have the work that is going on in the public accounts committee. I want to remind members of the action by the Minister of Health to appear in front of that committee several times, in my recollection, where she gave as much time as was needed. She answered all the questions, and she talked about how she was getting to the bottom of this situation.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, all of us are troubled by the events at Ornge, and I have outlined some of the steps that were taken by the minister. The one that is missing, though, is the legislative component. That's what this bill is about—of course, in the previous Legislature it was Bill 50. What it is is an attempt by the government to fill in that final piece of the puzzle and make sure the government has the powers and, indeed, that Ornge is working within the legislative framework in which there's the type of accountability that's needed. I urge all members of the Legislature to see this bill as this important final piece.

I've sat here today and through other debates and heard them stand up and harp on and about the problems in the past at Ornge. I think it's time that the members of the Legislature look forward, look to strengthen Ornge as it exists now and make sure its relationship with the government is strengthened through accountability through this bill, this framework that's coming forward. I congratulate the Minister of Health for bringing this forward, and I urge all members to send the bill to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you to the members from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Simcoe North, Kitchener–Waterloo and the government House leader.

A bit of a theme came through there. Just before the government House leader leaves, once again he wants to just deflect everything. He wants to sweep it under the carpet and just pretend it went away. It's not going to happen. It's our job; it's our duty to the people of Ontario to ensure. I can understand why they want to get past all these and move on, because there's boondoggle and fiasco, one after the other. It has to be getting painful over there to be doing that. We can't let that happen.

What really comes up here again is the lack of oversight, the lack of accountability. It's great to say, "We put a new accountability agreement in there, a new performance agreement." But you know what? Unless you actually know what's in there and you actually hold them to account, it means absolutely nothing.

My colleague from Simcoe North talked about a very important part here: an acute care paramedic who made him drive 75 miles to meet him because he is so afraid of recriminations from this government if he steps up to do the right thing. That's inappropriate. The culture obviously haven't changed, if it's still the same way—that he will not even do this because he is fearful of recrimination.

A couple of the members talked about accountability. It comes back again: Why are they so fearful of allowing the Ombudsman to take this on and add it to their portfolio? Why do we need to add more layers of bureaucracy and administration? You know why? It's so that they can deflect and control. They want it all to come back through their funnel so that they can just continue to say, "We want to move on. We're just going to sweep that under the carpet again."

One of the members, I believe the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, made a very salient point, similar to the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton. There are more questions than answers still coming out, and this bill is not going to do anything to turn that around. We need to understand that accountability. We need to ensure that there's accountability and transparency in any legislation. In this case specifically we need that because it wasn't there the first time. We've gone through a nightmare of a \$700-million waste of resources, and that might be just the tip of the iceberg. We need accountability. We need bills that are actually going to work for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank everyone who has spoken on this bill so far for their comments and their thoughts. I myself am eager to speak to this bill as the constituents of London-Fanshawe are very concerned about what has happened with Ornge and what continues to happen under this government's oversight. Too much money has been wasted, and more is being spent with no change so far. This government chose to prorogue this Legislature for four months, during which time they did nothing to make improvements to their own bill to strengthen the oversight and the accountability at Ornge.

I can hardly believe that this is the exact same bill the government proposed before proroguing the Legislature.

I am shocked that, even with an additional four months to review this portfolio, there wasn't a single new measure of control, accountability or transparency they could think of before bringing it back exactly as it was. What kind of message does this send to the people of Ontario? The question to the government is: Do you really believe that you have earned back the trust of Ontarians, who expected you do your job in the first place, with this piece of legislation?

I will tell you what this bill says loud and clear: that restoring the public's trust in this government and this agency isn't worth further consideration. It demonstrates the arrogance of a government so comfortable with their mistakes that they no longer feel the need to go beyond lip service. They don't need to rethink, they don't need to take responsibility, and they don't need to earn our trust back.

Well, the people of London-Fanshawe and the people of Ontario want and expect more than this. They deserve better than this; we all do. With millions of tax dollars blown under this government's stewardship, I would have hoped for more care and consideration than this legislation shows us. My riding struggles with unemployment soaring at just over 9%, and the southwestern economic fund has yet to be properly constituted to deliver so much as a penny. While the people of London-Fanshawe are desperate for funding of any kind, this rogue organization is running amok with millions of public tax dollars.

What took place at Ornge is the worst kind of abuse. This government has claimed ignorance and washed their hands of any responsibility, yet we know that if they had done their job properly the first time around, this fiasco may never have occurred.

For example, let's take a look at a few items that this bill includes. This means that, for the first time, the government has decided that it is important for them to be allowed to:

- appoint representatives to the board of designated air ambulance service providers;

- appoint a supervisor or special investigator, as can be done with hospitals;

- issue directives to air ambulance providers;

- allow for the amendment of the accountability agreement at any point through a regulation-making authority and without consultation with the service provider; previously the minister had to work with service providers on this;

- provide whistle-blower protection to air ambulance providers;

- facilitate the continuance of air ambulance services as provincial corporations.

An accompanying regulation—unrelated to the bill—to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act will add Ornge to the list of agencies accessible to freedom-of-information requests.

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Mr. Speaker, the provisions outlined in this bill do nothing but demonstrate that the government did not

bother to do their due diligence from the onset. Why are these items being included only now? Why weren't they included the first time around? Why did it take millions of tax dollars to be lost before they thought to include these measures? Did it not occur to them until now?

Even now, the government doesn't seem to want to be truly accountable. This bill is full of half measures and still denies true accountability. This bill seems far more interested in creating a system that works to protect the ministry than the people. How so?

Why does this bill deny the Ombudsman's office to oversee this organization? He is a non-partisan officer of this Legislature, yet this government would prefer to spend even more tax dollars by hiring their own officer for investigations—an investigator who, by the way, answers to the minister directly, and not to the Legislature and not to the people of this province. Whose interests are being served by that step? It appears that the minister is far more interested in preventing scandals from hitting the press than actually preventing them from occurring at all.

This is the same minister who told the Legislature that there were alarm bells raised in the January 2011 letter, and then later reversed the story and claimed there were none. Then she told this Legislature that she fired the board at Ornge, and then later on remembered that she did not have the power to fire the board and that they voluntarily resigned.

When the minister wants the authority to sidestep an investigation from the Ombudsman's office by spending more tax dollars on an investigator that reports to her directly, I am thinking this is not the way to earn back trust. It is the best way to control bad press and avoid taking public responsibility for her portfolio.

At the end of the day, Ornge will still not be able to be called before the public accounts committee. Why is that? What is the minister so afraid of? Is there more to uncover that we don't know? At this point, we have no reasons, and none have been given.

It's this attitude that Ontarians can't stand any longer. It's the attitude that says it's okay to spend tax dollars like it's Monopoly money. How can this government, in all honesty, think that spending more tax dollars in order to prevent their mistakes from becoming public is acceptable? Yet we are seeing this happen more and more frequently. We only need to look at the gas plant fiasco to see that the message is reinforced.

Ontario families need to know that Ornge is back on track. This bill does little to earn back the public trust and even less to promote accountable, transparent and excellent government services. Is this really the kind of half-baked leadership and oversight that the people of Ontario deserve?

How many tries at getting it right does this government think they're entitled to? First, they set up the agency and didn't bother to do the job necessary to protect the people of this province from a catastrophic abuse of powers. Then they denied the responsibility for it all going so wrong. In fact, the Minister of Health and

the Premier want all of us to believe they had nothing to do with it. They blamed a faulty accountability agreement. They blamed federal incorporations of Ornge. They blamed Ornge executives for not keeping them informed. All of their excuses have come to show one clear message: This government was either too incompetent to do their job or was complicit in this fiasco.

What happened at Ornge is not simply a case of mismanagement or incompetence. This was a case of flagrant abuse, with an intention to benefit the government-appointed board members. Ornge created a whole host of schemes, and all the information we have to date, all the official testimony, clearly shows that this government was informed every step of the way.

There is official testimony that this government knew and did nothing. From lawyers, from witnesses, the same story has been told in committee: The government knew but feigned ignorance. This strategy of pretending not to know is now their status quo of behaviour. From Ornge to gas plants, their not knowing and their not releasing information is the new normal. I say it's about time that this government take responsibility for their actions.

For me, this bill shows more than ever that the government has been asleep at the wheel. These basic accountability and transparency measures should have been in place from the creation of Ornge, but weren't. All this bill does is show the people of Ontario that this government did not bother to do its job in the first place with Ornge. More importantly, this bill does nothing to prevent another Ornge scandal from happening again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from London—Fanshawe for her comments.

Most members of the Legislature and, I think, the public and those that were interested in the goings-on at Ornge, myself as well as most others in the Legislature, I am sure, were very discouraged at what we came to learn from an organization that was provided a great deal of public trust, and an organization that was in charge of a large amount of public funds.

I don't think it's straying too far at all to say that severe, strong and quick action was required, and I think that's in fact what we have done. When I had a chance to speak on this issue relative to Ornge a little earlier this afternoon, I mentioned that I'm not sure what more you can do that's any stronger than calling in the OPP.

People who have been watching this transpire over the course of the last several months may not be aware, in fact, that we've done that. I think it's a very clear signal from our government that we view what may have transpired at Ornge—some of what we know, some of what we don't know for sure—that in fact, a criminal investigation that's currently ongoing and being conducted by the OPP is a very clear and a very strong signal from our government on how seriously we've taken the issue.

More to the point, I would say, in fact, to provide as much transparency and accountability around the goings-

on at Ornge, we have retroactively—and I don't know if this has happened before or not—provided and made Ornge subject to freedom of information here in the province of Ontario; not only retroactively, but of course on a go-forward basis.

Between the OPP's criminal investigation, and retroactively providing freedom of information and making Ornge subject to that, as well as what's contained in this legislation, I think it's a very clear signal in terms of how seriously we're taking these issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I've been interested in this debate all afternoon, listening to my colleagues and members of the third party and the government speak.

My father was a pilot. My brother still flies; he has been flying since he was 15 years old. One thing pilots do is they check out their airplane before they get going. They have to know what the airplane will carry so that they don't overload the plane, because it can only pick up so much weight.

He checks the rudders; he checks the ailerons; he checks the motor. He does all this type of thing before he takes off in the airplane or starts it up and gets ready to go.

It's interesting that when we were talking about the helicopters that Ornge has had an issue with—that somebody somewhere wouldn't have looked in these things and seen that they wouldn't work, that you couldn't do CPR in these things. You would think that somebody would have looked at that. Nobody did.

Interjection: Pretty basic.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Pretty basic stuff, you would think.

Now, I was very fortunate, Speaker—at least, my granddaughter was very fortunate this year; she got a ride in an Ornge helicopter. She broke her arm rather badly. She broke her arm rather badly up north, and she was flown to London. I was very thankful to the crew and the pilots of the helicopter that she was treated very well, and she's fine. Her arm is fine. But that thing had to be transformed into an aircraft that could transport patients. They spent millions of dollars on these things, converting them, converting a helicopter into something that would work.

That has been a signature of this government for too many years: You don't think things out, you blow the money, and then you've got to start fixing things, which costs more money. Unfortunately, this is a legacy of this government, and it's too bad that it's happened this way.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker, and my thanks to the member from London–Fanshawe for presenting the NDP's approach to this matter in her remarks.

Speaker, it is very clear that Dalton McGuinty shut down this Legislature for four months and in those four months the work that was needed to be done to improve

this bill was not done. My colleague has mentioned two points that I think people in this province understand quite well. The first is that this bill should give the Ombudsman oversight over this agency.

It doesn't matter which government is in power. It does matter that the people in this province, when they have a problem with an agency, have the authority, the right to go to the Ombudsman and say, "This isn't working. There are serious problems here. We need you to investigate." And then the Ombudsman can make that investigation, bring those problems to public light, instead of us in the public and in this chamber having to rely on employees who do their best but may not have the authority, the voice, the impact the Ombudsman has.

She also noted that legislative committees should be able to call Ornge before them in order to question the leadership, question the policy direction, question the operations—something that's commonly done with other agencies, with other bodies of the government of Ontario. The member from London–Fanshawe is right. That ability has to be incorporated into this bill. Legislators need to be able to question the management of Ornge if we're going to avoid this kind of scandal in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: The member from London–Fanshawe made a valuable contribution to the debate this afternoon.

Bill 11 is a bill that will go to committee, it'll get reviewed at committee, and one would anticipate that amendments will be made at committee.

There was some talk about prorogation. When I checked the prorogation that was invoked last October, in fact, we lost only 16 sessional days. And when I checked the history, in 1994 and 1995, the NDP government of the day didn't sit for the last year of that administration. Now, that's something, Mr. Speaker, that no one should be very proud of.

But I want to get back to the speech.

Interjection: You digress.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I didn't mean to digress, but I couldn't resist.

When you look at what's going on in Ornge, we have 600 front-line employees. We're beating the target quality-of-care metric 90% and exceeding the aviation safety target: 0.13 incidents per 100 flight hours—a target of 0.17—exceptional. From October to December 2012, Ornge air crews and aircraft were available to respond to calls 97% and 97.3% of the time; 93% of calls Ornge receives are for transports between facilities; currently 96% of these were confirmed within 20 minutes—pretty exceptional. Seven per cent of Ornge calls are scene calls, usually emergency cases. Currently, 90% of these were confirmed within 10 minutes.

It's rather interesting; talk about helicopters. A little situation is occurring in Ottawa today with the Cyclone helicopter that's going to replace the aging Sea Kings that are in fact falling out of the air. It was interesting: The Harper government had a helicopter; the armaments were so heavy on the Cyclone that they were under-

powered and couldn't take off. Now, that helicopter is back to the drawing board and costing hundreds of millions of dollars. So it's always interesting to look at those cases, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Now we return to the member for London—Fanshawe for her two-minute reply.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thanks, Speaker. We have been saying the same thing: that there's lack of oversight on this bill. We've asked for the Ombudsman to be the person designated to provide that oversight. I hope, when it goes to committee, that this bill—that the committee members will see—

Interjection: If it goes to committee.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Well, yes, if it goes to committee; exactly. If it does go to committee, I hope the committee members will actually see the importance, the seriousness, of asking for Ombudsman oversight.

I'd like to read something from the Auditor General's report on Ornge. He said, "... in February 2006," the Minister of Health "committed to set standards and monitor performance against those standards to ensure that the 'end result will be improved care, improved access to service, increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of service, and the assurance of greater fiscal and medical accountability.'"

Assurance of greater fiscal accountability: Part of that fiscal accountability hasn't been met through Ornge. There was a lack of fiscal accountability, and that's why we have the Ornges that we do today. We need to have oversight that's going to take this commitment from this minister seriously. You don't just say, in a quote in the Auditor General's report in 2006, that you are committed—committed—to set standards and monitor performance. There you go: If you're committed, then be committed to show Ombudsman oversight on this bill.

We urge you, Minister, to listen to this party and have Ombudsman oversight, to fulfill your commitment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to Bill 11, an Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services, formerly known as Bill 50 from the last session, unfortunately prorogued.

As several members of our caucus have stated today, our opinions on this bill remain mostly the same. In fact, last year a top-secret Liberal cabinet document leaked to the PC caucus confirmed that the Minister of Health wasn't totally honest with Ontarians when she continually claimed she knew nothing about the problems at Ornge. This document proved she in fact knew all about these issues—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member for Kitchener—Conestoga to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Michael Harris: Withdrawn.

I want to get to one of the incidents in that document, and that was a delayed response to a fatal helicopter crash in Waterloo region last year that tragically killed pilot Tiffany Hanna. Although Ornge air ambulance was initially called in, it was intentionally grounded when it was less than 10 minutes—because local ground ambulances were already on the way. Unfortunately, the helicopter wasn't put back into the air until regional paramedics arrived on the scene and discovered the seriousness of the injuries. When in fact paramedics called Ornge, they didn't immediately get through and had to wait on hold before speaking with an operator. This is a call to Ornge.

Now, I've talked to Tiffany's mother, Marion, and she agreed this type of failure is completely unacceptable.

The details in the leaked cabinet document showed that the emergency health services branch was prompted by media articles to launch an investigation on December 28, two months after the incident at the Waterloo regional airport. The investigation concluded that Ornge's launch policy caused the delay in the air ambulance's response to this fatal crash.

This incident, in fact, should have been a wake-up call for the Liberal government. Instead, though, it was business as usual. Ontarians expect the government to act quickly on issues of health and public safety, yet Ornge failed to act for nearly two months after receiving the report, and the government sat on their hands and allowed these incidents to continue.

I know that people in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga want to see true change in the way Ornge operates. They're sick and tired of hearing the excuses and seeing half measures. Having such an unfortunate incident occur in my riding is very saddening and concerning, especially when other members on the other side of the House continue to defend, including the minister herself.

This complete lack of oversight on a service that is a matter of life and death is truly troubling. When I see an Ornge ambulance driving on the road or one in the air, I pray that the person in danger is attended to and taken care of in the highest of standards. Hearing about that poor six-year-old girl in Windsor having to wait three hours for an ambulance that never arrived, or the incident with a dump truck and van in Stouffville where there wasn't enough staff on to respond, makes this an issue that cannot be taken lightly.

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And you would think that with all these tragedies the Minister of Health would stop at nothing to ensure that Ontarians had the best air ambulance service for those in critical situations to save lives. It continues to baffle my mind that the executives hired to make these important decisions couldn't even purchase an ambulance big enough to perform CPR. If you can only imagine, when you need the service the most—there was an accident; an air ambulance arrived at the scene—being told, "You know what? Unfortunately, we can't do CPR. We're going to have to put you in a land ambulance to drive wherever you need to go." That's truly troubling.

Beyond these expensive and life-threatening mistakes, just this past January more documents, in fact, were released on lavish spending from some of their top executives, money that could have been spent on more research into improving the air ambulances, or further training for the first-line responders, who we'd like to commend for their hard work and bear with through this troubling time over at Ornge—in fact, hiring more paramedics and pilots. Instead though, under the minister's watch, Chris Mazza enjoyed first-class trips to Europe where he stayed in first-class hotels, drinking expensive alcohol and eating at high-end restaurants. Or what about the lavish staff holiday party he hosted at his home with limos to and from? He even thought it was okay to expense the interest he accumulated on his own credit card he used to fund all of these parties.

I would think that on his \$1.4-million salary he could have paid for those interest charges on his own dime, but again, there seems to be that culture of entitlement, and we talked about that entitlement, in fact, this morning in another agency of the Ministry of Health. When people need those precious health care dollars the most, they cannot stand to see them being funneled to areas that truly are not in the front lines. That's what we saw over at Ornge.

Back to the bill, Bill 11, that's before us today: I recall, and some of my colleagues have mentioned that we had this bill, Bill 50, before prorogation by Dalton McGuinty. At that time, my colleague, the member from Newmarket–Aurora, Frank Klees, made many recommendations that would give this bill more teeth. However, none of those points have been included today. I raise some of these issues we had on Bill 50, since the government in fact didn't listen to our recommendations then.

First, I think we need to strengthen the whistleblowing protection in section 7.7. First responders over at Ornge, like the paramedics, the pilots, the dispatchers, work hard to ensure that they respond to the scene quickly to provide the best possible care for victims with the resources they have. They see first-hand how Ornge operates, and everyone here respects all of the work they do. Section 7.7 of the proposed bill says that those who make complaints about the system in order to fix the problem would report to their superiors at Ornge. Now, I ask everyone here today, if mismanagement and poor planning hindered your day-to-day task to get the job done and that mismanagement and poor planning was because of upper management's actions, who would you find confidence in reporting this to? Clearly not the culprit of the situation, Speaker. That is exactly why in this section we are suggesting that information can be exposed to the superiors of Ornge—about these people who are in fact causing the problems. If this government wants to bring true accountability back into Ornge, then whistleblowers should be confident that the critical information they provide to improve this agency's effectiveness is in fact protected from the managers trying to hide the scandal themselves.

Secondly, Ombudsman authority to investigate Ornge: The second part of this bill suggested that special investigators would be hired to have oversight over Ornge and propose recommendations. So on top of the \$700 million that has already been spent, we are going to create another government body and spend, in fact, more money. It seems to me that the Liberals have not learned their lesson.

This special investigative body would report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. They would not be independent of government, but would work internally. Clearly, Ornge needs an accountability review process going forward that reports back on a regular basis with updates on targets met or, in fact, missed. But I don't see any performance measures outlined in the bill or in an amendment to the original performance agreement. How can you accept that this is accountable when it is from within the organization itself? Quite frankly, this bill seems like an attempt to divert attention away from the fact that the minister has had the power to hold Ornge and its board responsible from the get-go.

Just recently, the Ombudsman raised a very good point in his letter to the minister, suggesting that he has a role to hold government to account. He already has the resources and the staff to investigate Ornge. In fact, it is his job description to investigate “the more than 500 ministries, agencies, boards, commissions, tribunals and corporations that fall under our jurisdiction.” The recommendation that I would make, like my colleagues have also made to this government, is to show that you are responsible to the people of Ontario and the families affected by Ornge. Support the Ombudsman's call and have him be the independent body to investigate and monitor the progress over at Ornge.

I ask the government to consider these recommendations yet again. They had that opportunity, given the fact that we were prorogued for several months. It would have been a great opportunity to go back to the drawing board—I know they rushed this bill out in the first place—and include some of those comments that we had made on Bill 50 prior to prorogation. But sadly, they didn't do that.

If this government continues to want to deflect responsibility, then it is going to continue to head down that same path that got them here in the first place.

With that, Speaker, I'm pleased to offer my comments to Bill 11. I await questions and comments from my colleagues, and I'll be back to you in a few minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's really interesting to hear the member from Peterborough; he couldn't resist weighing in on the prorogation. Our side of the House has been very clear: When this House was prorogued, it was an interruption into the democracy of this province. It was to avoid the scrutiny that they were under, which was Ornge, which was eHealth, which was gas plants—

Mr. Bill Walker: Power plants.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —power plants, yes, shut down.

For you to say “only 18 days” is an insult to every Ontarian in the province, and I’m telling you it is also a great lack of respect for the voters, a great lack of respect—“just 18 days.”

In that four months, do you think that you worked on this bill? No, you did not, because nothing was done on this legislation. In fact, here we are again: Groundhog Day at Queen’s Park. Every piece of legislation that died on the order paper, including this one—which fails the people of this province, I want to say—fails the people of this province.

Do you know what we’re concerned about? We’re concerned about accountability, we’re concerned about oversight and we’re concerned about patient care. When the people who worked on the front lines came to the government, you ignored them. They had the lived experience of living and working in crisis, of not having the right resources, of not having the right oversight. People in this province were harmed because you did not put those measures in place.

And you still failed them. You have still failed them, and all while in the defence of prorogation. You should stop talking about “only 18 days.” It is disrespectful, and it is unnecessary to pull that into this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I’m actually a little bit confused, because when I joined in the House here this afternoon, I thought we were talking about the Ambulance Amendment Act, 2013. I didn’t know we were talking about prorogation. But I’m very glad that the member from Peterborough had straightened out the record in terms of the actual loss of sessional days during prorogation. Just to build on that, of course, we had two extra weeks in June, and I think we came back early in August as well, so I think every honourable member of this Legislature has worked very, very hard on behalf of their constituents and Ontarians.

However, as I said, I believe what we’re debating here is the Ambulance Amendment Act, 2013. As I think many speakers have said before, we are grateful to the paramedics, the pilots and the front-line staff of Ornge for being the people they are, for putting patients first.

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But I want to talk about who else I’m proud of, and that is the Ontario Minister of Health. I’ll tell you why I’m proud of her: because she has implemented accountability agreements. If you listen to the comments that were made by the member from Kitchener–Conestoga and I think even the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, they are looking for accountability. This Minister of Health has delivered that, and it’s a model. The model that she has put in place, quite frankly, is a model for other ministries. It’s a model for other jurisdictions in Canada. We should be very proud of her, and Ontarians can be very proud that she has taken these steps to ensure that we have accountability, that we have transparency. We spend, as you know, so much of taxpayers’ dollars in health care, and the Minister of Health has been

proactive. She has been responsive to the issues. That’s what you do when you’re the Minister of Health. That’s what you do when you have a major file like this. When there are issues, you address them. She has done that. We can be proud, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has just explained to us in a very concrete way that you cannot have accountability without fulsome whistle-blower protection. We require protection for the dedicated employees we’ve been talking about this afternoon, employees who are willing to stick their neck out, to stand up for patients, to stand up for taxpayers, employees who take a great deal of pride in their jobs. We heard from a number of these employees during our public accounts testimony, employees who were bullied, harassed, ignored and, in some cases, terminated.

These are the words of Trevor Harness, a former aviation training officer with the Ministry of Health, part of MATC, the Medical Air Transport Centre. He described Ornge as “an experiment gone very wrong, an experiment whose responsibility” for going wrong lies “with the Ministry of Health” and with this government.

He described the organization that was created under the nose of this Minister of Health as an organization “built on a culture of fear, intimidation and harassment.” It sounds like Caledonia; it sounds like the Six Nations Caledonia situation in my riding. “Anyone who questioned any decision, policy or procedure was dealt with swiftly, from immediate dismissal to threats of legal prosecution. Many hard-working, responsible and dedicated employees found themselves forced out of a job they were committed to, and no one would listen at the Ministry of Health, whose job it was to oversee this vital emergency service.”

That’s why the member from Kitchener–Conestoga just finished telling us you get no accountability without whistle-blower protection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I neglected to make this comment earlier, and I would like to make it now. I think to a certain degree we have to give the Minister of Health some credit for the fact that Ornge is going in the right direction now, and she certainly has done that. I think that should have been acknowledged in my previous comments, which is fine.

But my concern is this: that these steps could have been taken years and years ago. There’s nothing particularly unique about the circumstances now that the Minister of Health could not have done this years and years ago. The oversight could have been done years and years ago—

Mr. Bill Walker: Should have been done.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It should have been done. The oversight should have been done years and years ago. The salary disclosure, which was the key to unlocking this entire problem, was something requested of the min-

istry years and years ago. The essential problem is that this scandal could have been avoided if steps were taken earlier, if the oversight was done in a timely fashion.

The whistle-blower protection is so important. If we look at the track record or the history of Ornge, the excellent care provided by the front-line service workers was damaged or was put in a position where they couldn't do the care we wanted to. They tried to come forward and complain about that. They tried to address that problem. Those great front-line workers tried to raise these concerns of the ministry, and many of them were silenced. Their concerns were ignored, and they were not reacted to. They were not acted upon. That's one of the crucial elements here; we have to make sure that, in the future, if anyone raises a concern in any transfer agency—not just in the health industry or the health care field; any industry, any division of the ministry—if there are any front-line workers who are raising concerns, we have to respond in a meaningful way. We have to investigate their concerns, because they are the front-line workers, and whistle-blower protection is an essential element of oversight that should be involved in any transfer agency in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now return to the member for Kitchener—Conestoga for his response.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank those that provided a comment on my initial remarks: the member for Kitchener—Waterloo, the Minister of Consumer Services, my colleague the member for Haldimand—Norfolk—who also sits on the public accounts committee—and, additionally, the member for Bramalea—Gore—Malton, who is also on that committee.

Just to wrap up the last minute and a half that I have, I think it's important to reiterate the important part of this legislation and what truly is missing; that is, as my colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk who sits on that committee says, the whistle-blower protection. As he had mentioned, you know what? There was actually a culture of fear, a culture of harassment over at Ornge. I'd like to thank the hard-working front-line paramedics and pilots for the work that they do, the services they provide Ontarians. As I had mentioned before, when I see an Ornge ambulance, either on the road or in the air, you have to think that that usually means trouble. These folks are put into this in seconds or at a whim's chance, and they step up and do what they have to do, so I would like to thank them for that.

But at the end of the day, those employees at Ornge, as the member for Haldimand—Norfolk said, were standing up for patients; they were standing up for taxpayers. And this government continues its trend of attacking those folks. You look at committees, whether we're in power plants—if somebody turns on them, the first thing that they do is they start attacking the person themselves. That is why whistle-blower protection is truly necessary in this bill. It's critical to ensure that, moving forward, we allow those folks to be able to make comments and protect patients and protect taxpayers,

because ultimately, that is in fact what they are doing here. It's unfortunate it wasn't in the bill, but we'll have to see where it goes in committee. Thank you again for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

M. Gilles Bisson: Monsieur le Président, je suis donc content d'être ici avec vous aujourd'hui et de parler de ce projet de loi.

On sait tous dans cette province ce qui est arrivé avec Ornge. Le gouvernement provincial a décidé qu'il y avait un système en place qui marchait bien, qui avait des pourvoyeurs de service qui donnaient des services à travers le secteur privé et le secteur public. En d'autres mots, quand on avait besoin de plus « d'air ambulances », on allait chercher d'autres opérateurs pour être capable de donner ces services quand c'était nécessaire.

Le gouvernement a dit : « Écoute, on a un système qui est parfaitement bon, qui marche très bien pour le public de l'Ontario et qui nous coûte moins cher. On n'est pas content. On a besoin de changer le système et de faire un système qui va fermer tous les opérateurs à travers la province qui sont des pourvoyeurs de service à travers des compagnies comme Commercial Aviation et d'autres, et on va créer cette nouvelle organisation appelée Ornge. »

Et monsieur, cet Ornge était une tomate. Cet Ornge était une tomate complète, parce que ce qu'on voit, c'est qu'on a un système en place—ce n'est pas que les travailleurs chez Ornge sont du méchant monde; c'est du bon monde comme tous les autres travailleurs de la province—qui, à la fin de la journée, nous coûte plus d'argent et qui, à la fin de la journée, possiblement nous n'a pas bien desservi pour les contribuables de la province de l'Ontario.

Je dis premièrement qu'on avait un système qui marchait, un système qui marchait bien. Il y a un vieux dicton en anglais : « Leave well enough alone. Don't fix what ain't broke. » Je pense qu'on aurait pu prendre ce dicton pour être capable de regarder possiblement comment on peut mieux faire. Mais de complètement changer le système dans la manière que le gouvernement a fait, je ne pense pas que ça fait beaucoup de bon sens. À la fin de la journée, tout ce qu'on a fait, on a fermé à travers cette province beaucoup de pourvoyeurs de service du nord-est de l'Ontario ou du nord-ouest de l'Ontario et d'autres places dans cette province. Les pourvoyeurs étaient « on call » quand on avait besoin d'eux. En d'autres mots, on les payait seulement quand on avait des travaux pour eux. Et là, on a un système où ça nous coûte plus cher et possiblement on n'a pas les services tels qu'on avaient avant.

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L'autre affaire : est-ce que ce projet de loi va, franchement, changer rien quand ça vient à la manière dont Ornge est ménagé? Moi, je dis, écoute. J'ai entendu mon collègue de Bramalea—Gore—Malton, qui a parlé et qui a dit : « Écoute. Il y a possiblement des parties dans

ce projet de loi qui sont intéressantes. La ministre dit essayer de réparer les problèmes qui existaient à Ornge. » Mais moi, je n'ai pas confiance que ce projet de loi va changer beaucoup. Est-ce que Chris Mazza, qui était le directeur de la vieille organisation d'Ornge, aurait été dans une situation différente sous ce projet de loi? Aucunement. M. Mazza aurait fait exactement ce qu'il a fait dans le passé avec ce projet de loi passé tel qu'il est proposé aujourd'hui.

Je me demande, c'est pour quelle raison qu'on a ce projet de loi? On a ce projet de loi, monsieur le Président, parce que le gouvernement a un problème politique, et ce gouvernement veut être vu comme : « On fait la meilleure affaire pour réparer les problèmes qu'on a causés en Ontario. Regardez, on va tout réparer. » Mais je vous propose que, quoi qu'il y ait dans ce projet de loi, comme on dit en français, il est très mince. C'est très mince dans ce projet de loi, ce qui va réparer les problèmes qui ont causé la mise à pied de M. Mazza et qui ont causé toutes les affaires qu'on a vues faisant affaire avec les dépenses à l'organisation Ornge.

I want to speak of my favourite subject, and the Clerk will have fun with this one because she knows this one is dear and close to my heart. This bill delegates the authority of this Legislature to cabinet. Why do we do that? What is it with this Legislature? We fought for centuries in order for us, the commoners, to have an ability to say to the King or the Queen that they can't do all that they want, that everything had to be done through a Legislative Assembly. The primary role of this assembly is to deal with the issue of taxation, but we also have a responsibility to make sure the laws that we draft in this House, the laws—I shouldn't say "draft"—but the laws that we pass in this House, once they are finally enacted, are according to the will of this House. If you look at this bill, a lot of the details are left to the delegation of cabinet to make up the regulations. We are delegating our authority as legislators to the cabinet of Ontario to determine how this bill is going to be structured when it comes to things like performance agreements and other measures within this bill.

I just say that that is a really dangerous thing, and I want to give you a good example. My good friends the Conservatives, when they were in power, had a bill that came to this House, and it said, "You know what? You shouldn't have a casino unless there was a referendum." It was pretty clear, when I was in this Legislature, what we were voting on. We were voting on a measure that said, should there be a casino in this province, the municipality would have to have a referendum where the people made the decision. So I stood in this House knowing full well what was in the bill and I voted because I knew that this bill would in fact provide for a mechanism—a referendum—in order to give people and municipalities an ability to say yes or no on a casino. So that was the intent of the legislation.

But the problem with the Conservatives is, they delegated all the detail to regulation.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm trying to give you guys credit. I hear the Conservatives heckling me. I'm finally saying something nice about Conservatives, and they can't take it. But listen: I just want to say that it is hard for me as a New Democrat to say positive things about the Conservatives, but sometimes we'll agree. I thought the idea of the government providing a mechanism for referendums to municipal citizens about casinos was a good idea. But the problem is, they delegated everything to authority.

So what did Dalton McGuinty do when he came to government? He sat in cabinet one day and he said, "You know what? The regulation says we can do the complete opposite of what the bill intended, as passed through the House." So the government, by regulation, essentially took away the provision that forced municipalities to have a referendum in the case of establishing casinos.

My point is this in this debate: Why are we delegating our authority to cabinet? This Legislature is responsible for the legislative part of what is government. Cabinet is responsible to execute what this Legislature has decided. And I really have a hard time when governments of any stripe decide that they're going to delegate everything to authority. It is, quite frankly, wrong-headed in my mind, because a future government can completely invert what the House wanted in the first place. I was in this Legislature. I knew what I stood and voted for when that bill came to this House on referendums for casinos. That is not what's happened at the end as a result of what the cabinet of Ontario under Dalton McGuinty did when it came to the delegation of authority.

So I would say to members of this House that, should this bill go to committee, we should really look at tightening up the sections that deal with the delegation of authority to the cabinet to deal with the issues of, for example, how performance agreements are to be negotiated, because under the bill, it's up to cabinet, and cabinet could say, "There will be no negotiation; there will be no discussion. We'll just do what the heck we want." That's not what democracy's about.

The other thing I want to say is this: Mon bon ami M. André Marin, qui est l'ombudsman de la province de l'Ontario, nous a dit : « On a encore un problème dans ce projet de loi qui fait affaire avec l'ombudsman, qui n'a aucune autorité de faire la vérification d'Ornge et de regarder à ce qui se passe au sein de cette organisation si ce projet de loi est passé. » Imaginez-vous, monsieur le Président, si M. Marin, qui est l'ombudsman de la province de l'Ontario, aurait eu l'autorité dans les années passées quand ça vient à Ornge, ce qui aurait pu arriver. Moi, je le sais. J'ai eu des coups de téléphone par du monde qui travaille pour la nouvelle organisation d'Ornge, tel que mon collègue M. Howard Hampton, qui était dans le temps du nord-ouest de l'Ontario, qui nous disaient les préoccupations qui se passaient avec Ornge. M. Frank Klees, le député conservateur du comté de Newmarket-Aurora, avait exactement les mêmes appels que nous autres. Nous autres, on a essayé d'appeler l'ombudsman pour être capable de donner à M. Marin

l'habilité de faire une investigation. Mais Ornge était exclu de la législation qui donne l'autorité à l'ombudsman de faire la vérification—cette organisation qui était appelée Ornge.

Quand on regarde à ce projet de loi, monsieur le Président, je ne sais pas comment vous le dire—je sais que vous allez être très déçu et que vous allez peut-être brailler ce soir quand vous regardez, pensez et réfléchissez à ce que je vous ai dit—mais M. Marin n'a aucune responsabilité ou habilité d'investiguer la question d'Ornge une fois que ce projet de loi est passé.

Donc, comme mon collègue de Bramalea-Gore-Malton a dit au début du débat, écoute, est-ce que la ministre essaie d'être vue comme quelqu'un qui fait

quelque chose de positif pour contourner les problèmes avec Ornge? Je pense que la réponse est oui. Je pense qu'elle essaie d'être vue ainsi. Mais quand ça vient à la concrétisation de ce qu'il y a dans cette législation, je ne pense pas qu'il y ait beaucoup là-dedans, qu'on peut accrocher notre chapeau et dire qu'à la fin de la journée on va avoir une meilleure habilité d'arrêter un futur Chris Mazza chez Ornge.

Merci.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being very close to 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 26 March 2013

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Mardi 26 mars 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 March 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 mars 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 25, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / *Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm certainly pleased to rise in response to a number of the comments that have been made in relation to Bill 11, the air ambulance act.

First of all, I'd like to address something that seems to have been coming up in comments from the third party in relation to some testimony that we heard at public accounts last week; namely that of Dr. Andrew McCallum, the former chief coroner who is now president and CEO of Ornge. The third party is saying that Dr. McCallum stated that Bill 11 is unnecessary. I was there; this has been taken completely out of context. Dr. McCallum stated that the provisions of Bill 11, all the types of protections, the patient advocate, the whistle-blower protection—all these types of measures have been, in fact, instituted at Ornge under his leadership. The quality improvement plan, the performance agreement, all these provisions that we are enshrining in legislation have been introduced by Dr. McCallum—and prior to him, Mr. McKerlie, the former interim CEO. At this moment in time, the various protections for the Ontario taxpayer and for the public safety aspects of the service are all being looked after through the new leadership at Ornge. So I really take exception to the fact that the third party is saying that Dr. McCallum said that Bill 11 was unnecessary.

We all know that memories fade of issues that have gone before. There are new challenges in this House, and

we need to have this legislation enacted so that never, ever again can something like this occur.

I would continue to urge all members of this House to support Bill 11. We need this act, and we need it for protection of the public here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure today to respond to the member from Timmins–James Bay. In a lot of ways, we agree with the position of the NDP.

I just want to make it very clear that with this particular issue of the Ornge ambulance fiasco, if you will, before the public accounts committee now, I'm surprised and indeed disappointed that the minister hasn't, at least as a courtesy and out of respect, waited for the findings of that committee—to bring forward another bill which really doesn't get the entire job done. In my understanding, a lot of the nuances within Bill 11 are actually permitted under the powers of the Minister of Health today.

But what is most troubling is it seems that the trouble continues. When our critic Christine Elliott spoke on this, she said that as far back as 2005, the ministry was advised by the Auditor General of Ontario of trouble at the organization. Every day for months, we received trickling independent information from the media. The most troubling, of course, was back some time ago, just earlier this month—insurance for Ornge had cost \$450,000. They bought Chris Mazza, who was making about \$1.5 million for Lord knows what he was doing, an insurance policy at the cost of \$450,000. It was a \$10-million life insurance policy.

This is the kind of waste—and what I always think of: Always put the constituent first; always put the people of Ontario first. It seems that in many cases, specifically in this organization, that they're putting themselves first. Can you imagine people making over \$1 million in an organization dealing in health care, that is already struggling for—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you for your comments.

The member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think that it's really interesting that some of the criticism of what we put forward yesterday—one of the main points of contention for our party is that this Bill 11 does not have Ombudsman oversight. We have said very publicly that it's a missed opportunity to put another measure of accountability into the legislation. Ombudsman oversight, as well as including all health care organizations, is desperately needed.

The Ombudsman's office has repeatedly called for oversight over the MUSH sector, and Ornge should be no different. Perhaps if the Ombudsman had been provided with oversight, we would not be in the mess that we're in today and the Liberal government would not be trying to change the channel.

New Democrats are still very concerned that what we see here is a government that's still trying to dodge responsibility and change the channel. Does the public have any assurance that what happened at Ornge will never happen again? No—unequivocally, no. Does the public see a government that is willing to take any reasonable steps to ensure transparency and accountability at Ornge? Again, no. If you were very serious about this issue, you would include the Ombudsman having oversight over Ornge.

To make matters worse, there are questions that are puzzling and actions that don't make sense. Why is this government introducing far-reaching regulations that allow them to change the bylaws of a corporation without any notice or agreement? This is a dangerous precedent indeed. Why is the issue of federal incorporation still being used? What does this mean to all of our federally incorporated health care organizations? That they are beyond the control of government.

We need to see some action from this government on where it matters most. We want to see acknowledgment that more should have been done and that concrete steps are being put in place to make sure that this never happens again, both at Ornge and at other transfer payment agencies. We do not have that assurance with this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

0910

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm pleased to speak for an additional two minutes on this piece of legislation, further to my comments last night.

In terms of the Ombudsman, which keeps coming up in some of this debate, the Ombudsman has an important role in Ontario. We understand that, and we respect that. But I just want to reiterate what I was talking about last night, and that is that we have a new accountability agreement in the Ministry of Health with respect to Ornge. As I said last night, I believe this is a strong piece of governance for Ornge. The steps that the Minister of Health has taken are extensive, they're concrete. There are requirements for reporting. There are new people involved in the oversight of the agency. I'm very proud and pleased that the Minister of Health has taken these steps. I think it's a model, quite frankly, for other ministries and other jurisdictions. Going forward, I think this will only help to serve the agency. I know the staff of the agency work hard every day on behalf of Ontarians and will continue to do so. With this new framework, the new leadership in Ornge, I think we can all be confident.

Is it a perfect organization? No. Were there issues in the past? Yes. But with the new framework in place now, I think we, the Ontario Legislature, and all Ontarians, can

take pride and confidence that Ornge is a well-run organization now and that the folks involved in the agency will continue to serve Ontarians and be there for all of us when we need air ambulance the most.

Thank you, Speaker, for this opportunity to speak again this morning on the legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Timmins—James Bay has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The government is telling us that this legislation is going to fix the problems at Ornge and we're not going to see yet again another billion dollars of money wasted by this Liberal government. I've heard this song three times before. Do you remember eHealth? The government had eHealth and they spent a billion dollars that they shouldn't have spent, and the government said, "Never again will that happen." Then what happened? Then we had Ornge. The government said, "Oh, we spent a billion dollars of taxpayer money that we didn't have and we'll never have that happen again." And now we've got gas plants, and the number—God knows what it is. It's \$600 million or \$1.3 billion, somewhere in between. The government is yet again wasting taxpayers' money on things that we shouldn't have spent the money on. And the government is trying to make me believe that the legislation before us is going to plug the hole? The hole is so big in the Liberal caucus that that ship will never float. There's no way that you can guarantee that this legislation is going to stop that stuff from happening again. The issue is, you have refused to give Ombudsman oversight to this particular committee. This bill is so full of holes you can drive a Mack truck through it and sink five Liberal ships without any difficulty.

I want to be clear: We'll vote for the bill at second reading, only because I want this bill to go to committee so that we can actually do some of the things that should be done to stop these types of things from happening again. The test will be, will the government accept those particular amendments? That will be the test, and that will be the determination if we support this, as New Democrats, at third reading or not.

I want to say to the government across the way, \$3 billion of money we didn't have to spend would have gone a long way to eliminating our deficit and paying for the things that people want in this province, including some of the transit issues that face the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's great to speak on Bill 11 today, another billion-dollar Liberal scandal. Unfortunately, we've risen to speak on billion-dollar scandals plaguing this government far too often here in this Legislature.

Interjections.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thou dost protest too much, over on the other side, when we bring up these numbers. Forty million dollars is what they claimed for a gas plant scandal in Oakville, that we've heard in committee is costing hundreds of millions of dollars.

Interjections.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thou dost protest too much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would ask the members—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

Mr. Todd Smith: I would like to speak to another Liberal scandal. How about if we put it that way? Will that appease them? We'll just call it a Liberal scandal, another one. We won't attach a dollar figure on this one yet, because we don't know exactly what it is, but it's going to be a hefty Liberal scandal.

This Liberal government has spent nine years crowing about the health care system as they allowed their air ambulance service to deteriorate. I have a story that hits home, especially in Prince Edward county, and I will share that with you very shortly. It talks about the troubles not just when it comes to the financial disasters that we've seen at Ornge, but it also talks about the human disaster that we've experienced with the lack of oversight at Ornge as well over the last many years.

As one of our members just spoke about moments ago, this has been going on since 2005. Last time I checked, this government has been in power far too long, since 2003. The red flags have been raised time and time again, but this government has refused to act. Now they act and they bring forward a flimsy piece of legislation that isn't going to fix the problems. It's not going to plug the hole in the health care system that the member from the NDP just spoke of.

Millions of dollars were put into a system with no oversight, not because the mechanisms didn't exist but because the ministers who were in charge refused to do their job. They were asleep at the wheel. They were asleep at the switch. Can we imagine, really, anywhere else where hundreds of millions of dollars, possibly, could be wasted like they have been in Ornge—

Interjection.

Mr. Todd Smith: You caught that—and the person at the very top, the minister, would still be able to keep her job? We've had ministers who have lost their jobs and shown some humility and walked away after spending too much on orange juice, but not when you're wasting millions of dollars on the Ornge file here in Ontario. No, they continue to stick around and bring out this flimsy piece of legislation, saying that they're doing their job.

The waste of money has been painfully catalogued on the front pages of our newspapers now for months and months and months: \$50,000 wasted on a motorcycle that never moves. It sits in a lobby at the Ornge headquarters. It's an Orange County Chopper, a very cool bike, but why is an organization spending \$50,000 on a motorcycle to sit in their lobby as a decoration piece? Ski trips expensed to the tune of \$15,000; \$1.2 million in loans to former CEO Chris Mazza. That is just the loans; that isn't the salary. Over the last two years at Ornge, Dr. Mazza received \$4.6 million in salary. That includes loans and benefits and bonuses, of all things.

There was \$6.7 million in questionable deals with the company that was providing these helicopters for the air

ambulance service; the company was AgustaWestland. Hundreds of millions of dollars was spent on these helicopters that were too small for the first responders and those working in these choppers to perform CPR because they weren't designed properly. Those providing medical service couldn't provide CPR to those in need.

The cost of the air ambulance actually increased 20% under Ornge while they were handling 6% fewer patients at Ornge. An unexplained \$14,000 payoff to a Brazilian law firm by one of Ornge's for-profit subsidiaries; \$40,000 spent on a speedboat expensed to Ornge.

I know all of this happened under the minister's watch. And if we're to believe her, not a single bureaucrat or member of her political staff informed her about these over-expenditures. If that's the case, then the minister is either falling in her job to oversee agencies in her ministry—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it was “failing,” not “falling.”

Mr. Todd Smith: You could call it failing. If you want to say you're failing, that's fine. It'd be nice for you to admit that you're failing, but “falling” works as well. You've been falling down on the job, and I'm happy to see that the minister admits that perhaps she's been failing in her job, because the rest of us who are watching have realized that for a long time. So maybe some humility is starting to peek through here. Her ministry is failing to appropriately manage her staff. Neither is really encouraging; whether we're saying “falling” or “failing,” they're both negative implications.

0920

If only the Liberal dealings at Ornge stopped there. The firm of former federal Liberal Party president Alfred Apps was paid millions of dollars. People with connections to Liberal bigwigs like Warren Kinsella were major players at Ornge. Mr. Mazza even told the public accounts committee that Mr. Apps had arranged for a meeting between himself and Premier McGuinty. Ornge was failing Ontarians in many, many ways.

With the few minutes that I have left, I'd like to tell you a little story about a young boy in Prince Edward county. We've talked a lot already about the shortcomings when it comes to oversight and finances at Ornge, but I can recall when I was the news director at Quinte Broadcasting radio stations in the Quinte region in eastern Ontario—it was a May weekend, and two little boys were playing in the southern part of Prince Edward county. They were playing with matches, and one of them unfortunately was burned very, very seriously. The burns of this eight-year-old boy—his name is Joseph Stoness—covered 70% of the young lad's body. They were third-degree burns, a very, very serious situation.

Paramedics responded to the scene. I believe it was May 24, 2009. They knew that this boy needed the services of an Ornge air ambulance. He was in a very, very serious situation. While they were waiting at the scene, the Ornge air ambulance was on its way and decided that instead of stopping in Prince Edward county to pick up this young boy, it would make its way to Renfrew, which

is in the Ottawa Valley, of course, and it would bypass this serious, serious call in Prince Edward county, where this eight-year-old boy had received third-degree burns to 70% of his body.

Those emergency responders who were on the scene in Prince Edward county were beside themselves. They were very, very angry when they received the call from those at the hospital informing them that in fact the air ambulance would not be coming to Prince Edward county; they had been diverted away to a call in the Renfrew area.

The reason, it's speculated, that that took place is because Ornge had been directed from someone at headquarters that in fact they could get that call in, in the north, and make money on that call and then eventually get back to Prince Edward county to pick up the young boy there and take him to the hospital.

Unfortunately, those on the ground who were driving the ambulances and providing the service on the ground said, "We can't wait." They drove the boy to the Picton hospital, Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital, and he waited there. Eventually, that air ambulance did make its way to Prince Edward county. The Prince Edward county OPP detachment issued a report a few days after, saying that the child was airlifted from the location to Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto, but that in fact didn't take place; it never happened. EMS and land ambulance transported him to Picton. The Ornge dispatched to pick up the child was diverted by Ornge dispatch five minutes from landing at Picton. The diversion to Renfrew was met with a lot of resistance, as I say, from the attending physicians as well in Prince Edward county. Several hours later, that air ambulance made its way to pick up the boy and take him to Sick Kids in Toronto.

There are problems with the field trauma triage guidelines, that burn victims don't fall within the environmental standards. So there are some changes that need to be made not just in the way that the finances are looked after at Ornge, but there are some serious problems and shortcomings when it comes to the medical guidelines as well.

Thank you for your time this morning, and I look to comment further on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I touched on this point yesterday and I want to touch on it again just to clarify my position. I think that while we recognize that after the scandal broke and after the Toronto Star and other news agencies released the story related to the exorbitant salary of Dr. Mazza, among other things, the Minister of Health did take some actions that worked towards putting Ornge on the right track, on a new track, and I recognize that. But what I don't acknowledge is that the bill is necessary. I don't agree that it's necessary. In fact, if you look at all the steps that the minister took, the minister took all these steps without having any bill before this House, without having any bill passed. The fact that there was a new board, the fact that there's a new CEO, the fact that

there's now continual contact between the ministry and Ornge—all of these things are happening without this bill being passed, without this bill being enacted. So I ask, and I question, why do we have this bill in the first place? If the ministry is able to make the changes without the bill, if the ministry is able to have oversight without this bill, why even waste the time of this House in discussing and debating this bill?

In fact, my colleague mentioned that this has the optics of simply a political manoeuvre to show that more is being done, but what it does is highlight the fact that this should have been addressed years and years ago. It highlights the fact that this could have been addressed years and years ago, without any bill being before this House.

The Ministry of Health is the primary funder—the sole funder—for Ornge. For any transfer payment agency where you are the sole funder, you have great powers of moral suasion. You can convince and encourage and persuade that organization to do the right thing. That's what we've seen, and we'd like to see that happen moving forward, and we'd like to see that happen with proper oversight in all transfer payment agencies.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I want to comment on one of the things that greatly distresses me about this whole conversation. What we hear over and over again from the opposition is a catalogue of past wrongs. If you listen to the opposition, you would think that that's what is going on today. The feedback I get from front-line workers at Ornge is that they are truly distressed and truly insulted by the impression that the people in this Legislature often give the public about what is wrong, because people think it's still wrong, and it's not.

I would like to read you some of the data about what Ornge is like today, which is because that minister took control and fixed things. From October to December 2012, these are the stats. If you look at the Auditor General's reports, one of the concerns was that often crews weren't available to respond to calls. The current data is that Ornge air crews and aircraft are available to respond to calls 97% and 97.3% of the time, respectively; that's crews and aircraft. That's a dramatic improvement over what it was when Mazza was there.

Some 93% of the calls that Ornge receives are actually for transport between facilities, which, in plain English, means from one hospital to another hospital, typically from a hospital in a small town to a teaching facility where there are specialized services.

Some 96% of these calls were confirmed within 20 minutes, just to do a patient transfer from town 1 to town 2; that's new. Seven that are actually emergencies—90% of these calls are confirmed within 10 minutes and the aircraft is on the way. That is a dramatic improvement in performance, and I think we need to recognize that in the front-line workers from Ornge and say—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: My esteemed and fine colleague who represents Prince Edward–Hastings with great fortitude and knowledge has made some very good points here this morning.

One of the things that I find disturbing is the simple fact that this government—it's the same government that was led under Mr. McGuinty, and now it's under the new Premier, supposedly bringing in changes and the whole new facade. But no matter how many coats of white paint you put on the old fence, the old fence is broken and the old fence needs to be replaced.

The Minister of Education can rhyme off all the statistical data she wants, and she can make a good front for the Minister of Health. But the bottom line, and I know—I have many, many friends here on the front lines at Ornge, Minister—many friends, Minister—personal friends that I grew up with, who will sit down and will be more than happy to talk to the Minister of Health, if they can actually get through to the Ministry of Health, and would be more than happy to share their frustrations with what's going on at Ornge.

0930

You know, we as politicians sit here and we can talk about situations, and that's what we do, but a lot of times we don't listen to what is actually going on. This is the problem and this is one of the reasons why I got involved, because when I'm listening to people back in my riding and to front-line paramedics and Ornge operators, whom I have the greatest admiration and respect for, I'm getting a different depiction from the front lines than I am from this government sitting across from us.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, boy, that's an interesting defence on the part of the government, saying that this is all in defence of the workers at Ornge. The workers at Ornge were almost swinging off the chandeliers as this whole thing was unfolding, and the government wasn't listening. I was one of the members, along with Howard Hampton, some years ago, who raised this issue at committee—the concerns that were being brought forward by workers. I know that Frank Klees, the member from Newmarket–Aurora, did the same in order to raise alarm bells about what was going on at Ornge, and the government wasn't listening. The government, because there was a majority, was saying, “Oh, there's no problem. Everything is okay. Don't worry about it. You're the opposition. You're just being partisan.” Well, \$1 billion later, who was being partisan?

The Liberals, quickly frankly, wasted \$1 billion of taxpayers' money on something they shouldn't have spent the money on. This is not once; they did the same thing under eHealth. They spent \$1 billion on eHealth that they didn't have to spend. They told us, on both of those occasions, “Don't worry; it'll never happen again.” Now we have got gas plants that you're spending between \$600 million and \$1.3 billion on—we'll see what the final number is. All I know is that the Liberals, when it comes to using taxpayers' money for their own political self-

interest, are pretty darn good, but they're not very good at the political interest and the interest of the public.

I say that that \$3 billion of wasted money would have gone a long way to reducing the operating deficit of this province. It would have assisted us in making sure that we have the dollars to pay for some of those services and things that we need to do in this province, such as making sure that we have a good transit strategy that is properly funded.

Now the government is about to spend another \$1.3 billion to give corporations the ability to write off their entertainment expenses—nothing that anybody else can do in this society—so the count is up to \$4.3 billion of money we should have not spent.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank those who spoke as well this morning, from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and Timmins–James Bay, as well as the Minister of Education and my good friend from the Trenton–Warkworth–Campbellford area, Mr. Milligan from Northumberland–Quinte West riding.

You'll recall that for much of last year—I was thinking about this as I was walking down here this morning to the Legislature as the bells were ringing for five minutes to warn us all that we were coming in to start our debates for the day. I was thinking back to last year, when the bells wouldn't just ring for five minutes; they would ring for 30 minutes. The reason that they would ring for 30 minutes is because we were opposed to this government and their misrepresentation or denial of the will of this Legislature.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Continue.

Mr. Todd Smith: You might remember that the health minister spoke several times about the fact that if it was the will of this Legislature, there would be a select committee to look into everything that was going wrong at Ornge, and it never happened. It never happened. And do you know what? The Minister of Education can say, “Hey, we're on the road to recovery,” but I can tell you, just back to my story about little Joseph Stoness in Prince Edward county, that we're not on the road to recovery. What needs to be done hasn't yet been done. This bill is a stopgap measure to stop those bells from ringing, and it certainly didn't work.

I can tell you that burn patients, like the little boy in Prince Edward county, still don't qualify under field trauma triage guidelines set out at Ornge. So, this could happen again. They're under consideration at the Ministry of Health, but what isn't under consideration at the Ministry of Health? It's time to get to the bottom of these problems and get Ontario back on the right track before we lose more money and more human collateral occurs in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think that this debate is really important. The government has said that we are focusing on past wrongs, but the important thing about focusing on past wrongs is that you learn from those experiences. And this bill, G11, the Ambulance Amendment Act, as it's presented has not been revised to prevent—for instance, the example from the member from Prince Edward-Hastings—it has not been adjusted to make those changes so that that little boy is not in that same circumstance again.

Let's look at what this bill does have, though, for instance. There is, thankfully, whistle-blower protection. I think that we've seen from across the province that front-line health care workers have been speaking up; they've been standing up for their patients and taking great risks in doing so. This proposed legislation would protect an air ambulance attendant from coming forward and bringing forward his concerns. However, we can actually adjust that and adapt that to include also, in the mainstream health care field, personal support workers as well as long-term-care workers.

It also does—it's an accompanying regulation unrelated to the bill: The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, FIPPA, will add Ornge to the list of agencies accessible to freedom-of-information requests. As many of you know, we put in many of those requests. We wanted to find out about costs; we wanted to find out about mismanagement. Had we had the opportunity to access that information and had the government provided that information, perhaps we could have brought forward some ideas and pressured the government to take some action.

What's not in the bill is actually more important for us on this side of the House. The oversight of Ornge by Ontario's Ombudsman is still not granted. I know the government has expressed some frustration that we keep bringing this up, but when you listen to the Ontario Ombudsman, André Marin, he's expressed strong concern that his office will continue to not have oversight of Ornge. He has said that without his oversight, there will be "no credible accountability." The patient advocate role reports to Ornge's vice-president, not the public or even the board of directors. So we have a credibility issue and we actually have a trust issue with the people of the province.

Ornge will continue to be an organization that cannot be called to government agencies. Government agencies is an important place where we can actually hold a level of accountability for the people of this province.

Finally, the bill cannot obscure the fact that the Ministry of Health has refused to look at their own role in this. And the reality is that this bill will do nothing to prevent future scandals from occurring at other government-funded agencies or organizations. The bill brings far-reaching measures to an organization that is already subject to—and I think the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has raised some very good points. Why are we actually having this conversation about this bill? A huge missed opportunity, when this

House was prorogued on October 15; the government could have gone back and reworked the bill, added Ombudsman oversight, for instance. Having the ability to bring Ornge to a government agency—these are revenue-neutral options, definitely another layer of accountability that we could have adapted to.

Today, we're debating Bill 11, and we've been here before. It's no different than it was pre-prorogation. I know that people know how strongly I feel about prorogation. It was a missed opportunity, it was an interruption in democracy, and it was obviously an opportunity for the government to avoid scrutiny. Instead of using that time for a positive goal—to rework G11—nothing happened. It's a little bit like Groundhog Day; it's a little bit like *déjà vu*. Quite honestly, the government shouldn't be surprised that in the four months that the Legislature was shut down, by not bringing Ombudsman oversight into the bill, we are unhappy with that because the public at large would like to see more accountability in this government agency.

But we are happy. I think it's important to say what is good and that we're happy that this legislation would bring Ornge under FIPPA, so, subject to freedom-of-information requests.

I think yesterday, though, I raised a number of concerns fundamentally about transparency. It's so important that transparency is at the core of this legislation moving forward. Air ambulances often deal with life-and-death situations—high-stress, crisis situations, much like the member from Prince Edward-Hastings has told us—and sometimes things do go wrong. For those families to know that they can rely on the excellent services of the Ombudsman for impartial third-party answers often brings help and closure. People want answers when things go wrong, and they won't get them under this current circumstance.

0940

You would think that this new-found desire for transparency—because there's a lot of talk and there's a lot of conversation about transparency and accountability—would bring us Ombudsman oversight, but no; Ornge remains outside of the mandate of our Ombudsman. As I already pointed out, Ornge will also not be called to public accounts or any other government agencies. This is a real trust issue and a real accountability issue, and the government has given us no reasons whatsoever why they are reluctant to take these easy and cost-free steps. They say, "No. We've got it under control."

But, you know, we've heard this before. In fact, in the Auditor General's report on Ornge, from February 2006, the Ministry of Health "committed to set standards and monitor performance against those standards to ensure that the 'end result will be improved care, improved access to service, increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of service, and the assurance of greater fiscal and medical accountability.'" So we heard this in this House. We heard the defence of that report. We heard a promise. But the ministry never fulfilled their end of the deal. As the auditor said in his report, "However, the

ministry" had "not been obtaining the information it needs to meet these oversight commitments." In other words, the ministry wasn't even trying to improve the operational standards, the accountability. You weren't asking the hard questions about salary, about fiscal management, and the fact is that the performance agreement included many tools of oversight, but the ministry failed to do their job.

The Minister of Health's main line of defence is that this original performance agreement tied the government's hands. But you have to remember who you're working for. We're working for the people of this province, and you need that level of accountability. Also, it mentioned that although the ministry wanted to keep Ornge in line, they were first prevented by this inadequate agreement and that they were lied to by the Ornge executives.

Really what happened, if we're clear and if we're honest, is the public raised concerns; the front-line workers raised concerns; this House, the opposition, raised concerns. We forced this issue to come to the floor. That's part of our role as the third party and as the opposition, to actually hold the government to account for your practices and for your policies and, quite honestly, for your legislation.

In summary, I think I'd say that New Democrats are still very concerned that what we see here is a government that is still trying to dodge responsibility and to change the channel. We have what appears to be a public relations exercise instead of fundamentally changing—making positive changes, constructive changes that actually serve the needs of the people of this province. Does the public have any assurance that what happened at Ornge will never happen again? We do not. This is an ongoing concern.

You had the opportunity to make this bill stronger, to make it more effective. That did not happen. Does the public see a government that is willing to take any reasonable steps to ensure transparency and accountability at Ornge? Again, no. And to make matters worse, there are questions that are puzzling and there are actions that don't make sense. Why is this government introducing far-reaching regulations that allow them to change the bylaws of a corporation without any notice or agreement? This is a dangerous, dangerous precedent. Why is the issue of federal incorporation still being used? These are outstanding questions. We have more questions than answers going forward. It makes it very difficult to be supportive of a piece of legislation that actually is ineffective.

There were many editorials over the last two years, three years that have been written about Ornge, and I think that one of the strongest ones is actually from the Waterloo Region Record. It mentions that there is a "bitter taste of Ornge." G11, this proposed bill, does not remove that bitter taste. More importantly, it doesn't hold the accountability. It doesn't improve operational management, and it leaves more questions than answers.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Question and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to hear from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo that she did see some positive aspects of this bill. Certainly, I would expect that people would see the benefits of instituting this piece of legislation.

I just want to focus on some of the protections, in terms of public safety, that have been instituted. First of all, Ornge has already created a declaration of patient values. This is going to guide the organization, going forward, in terms of what type of expectations the public can have. To assist with this declaration of patient values, Ornge has developed an online patient relations portal, and there is a guarantee for feedback on patient complaints.

They have hired a patient advocate to work with patients and their families to address concerns and advocate for operational improvements. I think we all know that quite often patient complaints just arise from misunderstandings. They're not necessarily in any way catastrophic, and there can be a process whereby explanations, clarifications can be provided through a patient advocate.

In terms of whistle-blower protection, which over the last several months we've heard quite a bit about, I think the way that this is being instituted is a very cautious approach, a very sensible approach. The whistle-blower hotline is answered by an independent ethics officer. Grant Thornton LLP is going to be in charge of that process. This is a completely independent organization, and I think this will be extremely helpful, should any further problems appear at Ornge.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to join in the debate and provide a few minutes of comments to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. I have to tell her that during the March break, I went to Gananoque—Speaker, indulge me for a moment—to get my car serviced at Chiasson Ford. Arnold Chiasson, Uncle Arnold—he is the uncle of the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. The dealership just reopened after a four-month renovation. I know that Arnold and Marilyn and their family are very, very proud of the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I wanted to pass along to you your family's congratulations from Leeds–Grenville.

Interjections.

Interjection: I'm sure they're proud of the member from Leeds–Grenville too.

Mr. Steve Clark: They're very proud, yes.

I want to just provide a few comments from what the member for Kitchener–Waterloo said about Bill 11. I want to take members back to a March 4 story by Rob Ferguson in the Toronto Star, "Ombudsman Takes Aim at Ornge Bill." You'd think that if the government wanted to get something right after what happened in the very tumultuous sitting we had just before the government ran and hid for 128 days, they would have gotten this Ornge piece right.

I want to take a quote from Mr. Marin in that Toronto Star story, that this patient advocate's "job description

posted last year calls on the advocates' office to 'investigate, resolve, document and report organization-specific patient and visitor compliments and concerns.'"

This Legislature doesn't want compliments to be dealt with. There are some real and severe concerns with Ornge and its operation.

This bill does nothing to have transparency and accountability.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to congratulate my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo on her presentation that was both sensible and intelligent.

I hear the response from government members, and you expect this. I recall my friend Howard Hampton saying four years ago, "This is going to be a disaster down the line," and he was right. I haven't said it often enough in this Legislature—because he was hearing from the front-line workers that there was a disaster in the making. He raised questions in the Legislature and, of course, the government didn't want to hear about it at the time, hoping to be able to contain the damage.

0950

Bill 11 attempts to contain the damage as best as it can, and I understand it. You hear the member from Oak Ridges-Markham defending an officer who is—an independent officer advocate, I think, is the language that is being used. But they refuse to do what New Democrats have been calling for for seven long, painful years, and that is that what we need to have is Ombudsman oversight over these matters.

Interestingly, Ontario is one of the few provinces in Canada where they refuse to have the Ombudsman's oversight over these matters, which include the hospital care, which include child care services. If we had such oversight, we would truly have an independent person doing a review with the powers to go in, investigate—the powers to bring forth people to account. If we had that, we would have the oversight we desperately need, and the government refuses to do that. Why? Why not show some leadership and have the Ombudsman have the power to have the oversight that is desperately needed? That's what the member is calling for.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to join the debate to follow up on the comments from the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. I think the member from Oak Ridges-Markham had it right when she said that she heard something positive, at least, in the comments.

I think all of us in this House aren't pleased with what happened at Ornge. I don't think anybody should be proud of the way that it was managed. I think any government that I've ever seen in the province of Ontario—I think in any modern democracy—runs into issues from time to time and they need to act. How that government is judged is on how it responds to the issues that it finds within its own government. We've all had them: The

Conservatives have had them, the New Democrats surely had them—Rosario, you'll remember them—and we've had them as well. It's how you respond to that; it's what you do next; it's how you resolve those issues. There will be others to come with other governments of different stripes, I'm sure. That's the way it works.

So it's what do you do next. What does this bill say you should do next? It says we need a new performance agreement. It says we need new policies and procedures on conflict of interest. It says we need some whistle-blower protection. It also says that we respect and we understand that the 600 front-line employees who provide this service on a daily basis are doing a good job for the province, are doing a good job for the people in the province of Ontario.

When we try to understand what they do on a daily basis—93% of the calls Ornge receives are for transports between hospitals or between facilities; 7% of those calls are scene calls—and those are the emergencies. That's where we see them land on the highways.

To say that this isn't a step forward, I think, would be an error. I think this is a positive step forward; it deserves the support of all three parties in the House. Its first quality improvement plan has been submitted, and it's going to build on the achievements of the past year. I think we've got better days ahead for Ornge and I think we should all be proud of that, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to the members from Oak Ridges-Markham, Leeds-Grenville, Trinity-Spadina and Oakville for commenting on Bill 11. I feel like we're going in circles a little bit on this one, but I go back to the fundamental purpose of bringing forward Bill 11. It was to rectify the damage, to make changes to the practices, to alter the procedures to ensure that Ornge was actually an effective agency, delivering a very important and fundamental service to the people of this province.

I just want to say to the member for Leeds-Grenville, I'm sure that my uncle would be very happy that you figured a car-dealership part of the conversation into the debate. But I can connect it. If something happened in Gananoque that required an Ornge ambulance, you want to make sure that that loved one—that parent, that grandparent—actually has a chance of receiving the services that the government has promised. I think that when we look at this bill and we look at the—first of all, really, God love the member from Trinity-Spadina. He will not give up on the Ombudsman. It is a theme that he continually brings, because he is right. We are right to ask for Ombudsman oversight over this government's agencies. He doesn't hear it a lot, so I just want to make sure I get it into the Hansard. When the Ombudsman says there will be a lack of credible accountability—his voice, his opinion has greater weight than all of us in here; a missed opportunity to actually strengthen Bill 11. We still have ongoing concerns, and we're really hopeful that, if it gets to committee, it can be changed in a very effective and positive way.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise and speak today to Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services.

On September 10, 2012, I stood in this very spot and debated Bill 50. For those watching from home, Bill 50 was a version of this bill last session that was swept away by the Liberals' shameful prorogation. I'm saddened to see that little has changed since I spoke against that piece of legislation. The bill remains toothless, a mere lip service, an illusion of action. It provides just enough that some may think the Liberals are tackling underlying, systemic problems at Ornge.

The tragedy at Ornge has an impact that extends far beyond the walls of the Legislature. It ripples into the homes of those who have lost loved ones. When Ornge helicopters were unable to reach a young girl in Windsor, not far from my hometown in Chatham, there was a tragic loss of life, and the family called for action to be taken to get to the bottom of what had happened.

Sadly, there is absolutely nothing substantive in this legislation. It is only an attempt to shift the blame away from the Minister of Health for her lack of oversight on the gross waste of public funds at Ornge. It's an attempt to divert attention away from the fact that the minister has had the power to hold Ornge and its board accountable from the very beginning of the Ornge saga. The minister had the power to intervene under the original Ornge performance agreement; article 15 of this agreement gave her intervention powers. After the scandal was brought to light—thanks to the hard work of the public accounts committee, the tireless efforts of our member from Newmarket—Aurora, investigative reporters and the Auditor General—the minister wishes to be seen doing something.

Perhaps the greatest disappointment of Bill 11 is that it fails to address the underlying cause of problems at Ornge: the existing structure of the air ambulance service. Even today, we still don't know exactly what happened at Ornge. This is because the government ignored calls for a select committee and refused to release many pertinent documents at Ornge. Even the Auditor General stated that Ornge would not willingly provide his investigation with documents. It's an organization that is plagued by mismanagement, corruption and scandal.

It's quite clear that the problems at Ornge are not merely skin deep. Urgent and meaningful reform is in fact required, but rather than recognize that it is flawed and requires direct oversight by the Ministry of Health, the Liberal government prefers to pretend a few minor tweaks will get the job done.

Some of these insignificant tweaks are abysmal attempts at providing whistle-blower protection. Since the government failed to form a select committee to look into the Ornge scandal, we rely on whistle-blowers as a primary resource for accountability. For every person who has the strength to come forward, surely others are staying quiet for fear of losing their jobs. The govern-

ment has stood up and stated that the bill will expand the scope of whistle-blower protection, when in reality it will set restrictions. Firstly, the bill does not provide across-the-board protection to whistle-blowers. This is such a basic measure, so incredibly obvious, that its omission from the legislation is an indictment of this government's ability to act. Further it imposes limits on which individuals are protected and whom they can approach with information. The point of whistle-blower protection is to ensure that people who come forward will be protected regardless of who they approach, not to only cover them if they happen to have read the legislation and gone through the ministry-approved contact.

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Lastly, this bill fails to provide a formal process for the Ombudsman that would have ensured proper protection and follow-up. Instead, the bill calls for the provision of special investigators who will be appointed by and answer to the Minister of Health, a consolidation of control that opens the door to translucency instead of transparency.

Ombudsman André Marin commented on this legislation in a letter to Minister Matthews, stating that the special investigators would not be independent of government and that "far from being watchdogs, they would operate on a ministerial dog leash."

Mr. Marin makes reference to the government's claim that this bill was brought about because of recommendations made by the Auditor General. To this point the Ombudsman states, "Nowhere in his report did he recommend (a) a new bureaucracy of 'special investigators'; (b) the creation of a patient advocate residing deep within Ornge whose partial responsibilities include being a clearing house for 'compliments'; or (c) the maintenance of the status quo with respect to the exclusion of any role for the Ombudsman."

The simple and obvious answer to this accountability and independence dilemma would be to expand the scope of the Ombudsman of Ontario to include oversight of Ornge. The public wants this. The Ombudsman has called for this. Both parties on this side of the House have called for this. Everyone seems to be in agreement with this noble idea except the Minister of Health. Why is she so afraid of proper Ombudsman oversight? What does she have to hide? We may never know.

The health minister has stated that Bill 11 "provides a lot more oversight" than a previous agreement Ornge had with the government, under which the air ambulance service set up a complex web of for-profit companies leveraged off tax dollars. The Minister of Health had absolutely no oversight of Ornge as it spent millions of taxpayer dollars while also failing to provide proper service. In that regard, I suppose the minister is, in fact, correct in saying that the bill would provide more oversight than before—a slight improvement over doing nothing at all. Mere lip service may be enough for the Liberal government, but it's not enough for me, nor is it enough for the PC Party of Ontario.

With the introduction of this bill, the minister is making it appear as though all is well and forgotten at

Ornge. In my opinion, Speaker, this couldn't be further from the truth. You don't use a band-aid to plug a gaping hole in a dam. I've recently spoken with an Ornge staffer in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex who has told me of several botched air ambulance missions. I can't mention him by name because there's not proper whistle-blower protection.

Let's face the facts: Ornge was a fraudulent scandal, a total mismanagement of taxpayers' dollars that wasted millions of dollars, putting lives of patients and crew members at risk almost daily.

In no way could I support this bill. The chief concern of such legislation should be to ensure that a similar tragedy can never happen again. Ornge was a tragedy in many ways. First and foremost, for those who died and the ones left behind, Ornge has done irreparable harm. No apologies, no investigation, no structural reform can ever take back a life or undo the damage to survivors. For these victims and those who remain, we must take real steps to guarantee that this is the last time a scandal like this occurs. For those who have lost faith in the institution of government—if there are any left—we must show them that there is a better way. We must put politics aside for certain issues. This is one of them.

I call on the government to scrap this bill. It is an insult to everyone that the Ornge scandal has impacted. Let's do the right thing: protect whistle-blowers, provide actual oversight and let the Ombudsman do his job independently so that we can start to move on from this mess.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank the member from Chatham Kent for his comments on this bill. The member has talked about meaningful reform that is needed in this bill. He pointed out one positive thing that has been put in this bill, which is whistle-blower protection, but it doesn't go far enough. There are loopholes in that whistle-blower protection that may cause people who have concerns who work at Ornge not to come forward.

The members opposite agreed with us as well that we need to have proper oversight, a democratic process in the government to show proper oversight to the citizens of Ontario. We need Ombudsman oversight. We have said this over and over again. What concerns me, Speaker, is when someone, just like the whistle-blowers—they kept coming to this Legislature. They came to the members here, the New Democrats and the Conservatives. Letters were sent out in July 2011—14 copies, apparently, to the ministry, and nobody saw them. I think, on that example, if a whistle-blower went to the Ombudsman, the Ombudsman's ears would perk right up and he would investigate this matter. This didn't have to be dragged on for four years.

The people of Ontario have lost faith in this government and their ability to oversee Ornge. That's why we're here today. We're here today to discuss this bill and how important it is that this wrong has to be corrected. We have to remember why we are here. We're

here to serve the public. This fiasco hasn't served the public interest. We have to remember that we are servants of the public.

I ask this government to please listen to the House on this side and consider Ombudsman oversight. We're going to pass this bill, as the member mentioned earlier, to committee, but we're going to work darned hard to get you to listen—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I'm happy to rise again to speak about the Ambulance Amendment Act. I'm very disappointed to hear that the PCs will not be supporting this, will not be helping us to move this bill to committee, to work on it, potentially improve it and bring ideas forward. To say that they won't support it really is a slap in the face to the Ornge organization and the good work that all of the people do there.

I think it also flies in the face of good movement forward. Some of the things my colleague from Oak Ridges moraine and my colleague from Oakville have talked about that the Minister of Health has implemented are indeed strong measures to increase government accountability, governance and transparency at Ornge.

We talked about the new patient advocate. We talked about improvements in the helicopters. We talked about expanded services in Thunder Bay. We talked about a dedicated patient flight service. We talked about the whistle-blower policy. We talked about a quality improvement plan. We talked about new performance agreements, and requirements to post executive expenses and salaries to improve accountability and transparency. We talked about other new policies and procedures on conflict of interest, performance management and executive compensation, and the appointment of an ethics officer.

Speaker, these are all very strong measures. I have spoken repeatedly over the last two days of how the actions of the Minister of Health, the measures she has put in place for more transparency and accountability, are indeed a model for other organizations. I think it shows progress; it shows we are responding to issues. I'm very happy to hear that the NDP will be supporting this and helping us move this to committee in a constructive and positive fashion, in the interests of Ornge and in the interests of Ontarians.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today to provide comment about my colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex today debating Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services, 2013—basically a response to the Ornge scandal that we have been hearing about, actually, for years.

A lot of members have made comment about that, that people that worked within Ornge had sent red flags to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for a long time.

The Auditor General did confirm that it was hard to get information out of them. So, there's up to \$3.2 million, I think, that has been wasted so far. We're still having committee hearings and still hearing witnesses. We did take a break on that because the government prorogued. That shut down our investigation into Ornge.

The people want to know about how their taxpayer dollars are being used and, certainly, the waste that happened. So we're talking about health here, but in general it's the government revenues. There's a waste of millions and billions of dollars that could be used to improve, in this case, home care services.

The minister always talks about the great things she's doing in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. One of the things she has not done is done proper oversight of Ornge and its misuses of money. You just can't put it off to the side and say it's all running well when there are lots of employers from Ornge that are saying red flags—issues aren't being dealt with. People are dying. Helicopters are being bought in which you can't even perform CPR. I mean, that's just basic if you're running an air ambulance company.

So, it does need oversight from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Our taxpayer dollars have to be watched, but first and foremost, the safety of the citizens of Ontario has to be monitored. We have that responsibility here, so I appreciate the comments from my colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex, and look forward to speaking on this later.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, the government is trying to position this as if it's going to fix all of the problems at Ornge in one fell swoop by the way of this legislation. I just want to say—listen, if that's what the government thinks, I think they're sadly mistaken.

We're going to vote for this bill even though we think this is a bill that probably doesn't do as much as it needs to, only because we believe it has to go to committee. That's going to be the real test: Will the government actually do things like give the Ombudsman the ability to have oversight over Ornge, something that this government refused to do?

I remind members that in this House, years before this became a scandal, Howard Hampton, myself and Mr. Klees got up on numerous occasions in committee and in this House and pointed out what the employees of Ornge were telling us at the time. When we went to the Ombudsman in order to get him to do an investigation, the Ombudsman told us he didn't have authority to do so. When we went to public accounts, the government used its majority to stop us from being able to do oversight at the time through the public accounts committee.

This government is trying to talk a good line that they fixed the problem, but the problem has not been fixed. We've now spent a billion dollars on Ornge, needlessly—money we didn't have to spend. We spent a billion dollars on eHealth—money we didn't have to spend. We've spent between \$600 million and \$1.3

billion on cancelling gas plants that nobody wanted and we didn't need, and the government is about to give \$1.3 billion in HST rebates to employers to be able to offset their entertainment costs. That's a lot of money.

We're talking close to \$5 billion that this government has wasted through the debacles at eHealth, Ornge, gas plants and now the HST issue, that we could have applied to the deficit, that we could have spent on transit funding, that we could have dealt with in order to have a better health care system, but this government's choice is always about their political self-interest and never about the interests of the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Chatham-Kent-Essex has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker. Again, I would like to thank the members from London-Fanshawe, Pickering-Scarborough East, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock—my colleague—and, of course, the member from Timmins-James Bay.

First of all, what I'd like to do is to extend my thanks: On behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the rest of our colleagues, our thanks to all of the hard-working air ambulance staff who have in fact come forward and shared with us the harrowing experiences that they have encountered as a result of this scandal at air Ornge.

Speaker, we talk about wasted money—absolutely right. Now all of a sudden the public are faced with no knee surgeries, no hip surgeries—people suffering in pain. Why? Because there is not enough money. I wonder how much better our health care system would have been, could have been, if this scandal, along with the other scandals in health care, had not occurred. It's the number one expenditure of this government. Lives have been lost. Family members have suffered.

We need to have protection of whistle-blowers. It's critical, as far as I'm concerned.

Do we need to move forward? The answer is yes, we do. We need to move forward from this. But do you know what? What has happened in the past cannot be forgotten, nor should it be forgotten. Do we learn from lessons? Yes, we should be learning from lessons.

I have a saying, Speaker, and it's this: If ifs and buts were candies and nuts, we'd all have a merry Christmas. If this hadn't occurred, I wonder just how much more would have been provided for our taxpayers, especially in the area of health care.

Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: First of all, I'd like to introduce Jacob Van Boekel, the page captain here today, from the great riding of Oxford. The reason I introduced him first is that he has a number of guests here visiting

with him today, and I'd like to introduce them. They're in the members' gallery: Mike and Jennifer Van Boekel, his parents; Gregory and Hannah Van Boekel, his brother and sister; Gerry and Thea Van Boekel, his grandparents; Betty and Bill Hampson, his grandparents; Tim and Carolyn Kaufman, friends of the family; and Heather Vondervoort and Zach Stevenson, who are Jacob's friends. Thank you very much. I'd like to extend a warm welcome to all the guests.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I rise today in the House to welcome my friend and my constituent Lorraine Gandolfo. She is currently the manager of communications and public affairs at the Ontario Trillium Foundation. She is active in the francophone community, and she sits on my Central West Local Health Integration Network board. Welcome, Lorraine, and happy birthday.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would have the privilege of introducing one of the top pages here, Andrew Hodgins. Both Andrew and his sister Keira go to College Park Elementary School in Oshawa. The family lives in Newcastle. Allan and Charisma Hodgins are pleased to be here with their daughter and their friends from Oshawa, James and Cathy Anderson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to welcome, up in the public gallery, students from St. Augustine Catholic High School, from my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to introduce, in the west members' gallery, a great citizen of Kingston and the Islands, and our PC candidate there, Mark Bain.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I want to introduce the proud father of page Andrew Sheehan, John Sheehan, who has joined us from Grimsby today. Andrew Sheehan, who I had a great lunch with last week, is a student in Grimsby, a Prime Minister of his student council, by the way, and a competitive gymnast winning awards across Ontario.

I just want to say to John and to Andrew that, for the time being, the Niagara West–Glanbrook seat is taken, but I appreciate the direction that this young fellow is heading.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm often concerned about the same thing myself.

Introduction of guests? The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to introduce our candidate from Kingston and the Islands, Mark Bain, who is joining us in the Legislature today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And we won't go for a three-peat on that one.

I have a few introductions of my own. On behalf of the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville, for page Emily Kostiuik: Her father, Mike Kostiuik, will be here shortly.

On behalf of the member from Huron–Bruce and Ellen Jansen, page: her mom, Val Millson, is here in the gallery for her visitation.

Finally, in the Speaker's gallery, a high school chum who does not have any stories about the Speaker whatsoever: my good friend Cal Waddell.

Thank you for joining us today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, as you may be aware, Ontario has lost 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs under the McGuinty–Wynne government. At the same time, you've added 300,000 jobs to the government payroll. So you've lost 300,000 jobs in manufacturing and you've added 300,000 jobs to the government payroll. Surely, as finance minister, you agree that this is not sustainable. I just want to ask you: Is that record an indictment of your predecessor, Minister Duncan, or an indictment of the Liberal government in general?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Depending upon the supplementary, I may refer to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

But I do want to set something straight here. The fact is, over the last four years, since the recession, the Ontario government, together with the people of Ontario, has done a tremendous job of trying to recover. We have over 400,000 net new jobs, a lot of them in the manufacturing sector, which has had some difficulty, and we are trying to work with them to try to provide for a new manufacturing sector to thrive.

But it's essential that we all do our best so we ensure our sense of recovery continues. That's why we maintain a very competitive tax regime. That's why we have lower taxes for corporate and for personal. That's why we're continuing to work closely with our corporate sector and our small business partners to promote those jobs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham, come to order, please.

Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the finance minister, who has the capacity to bring in a new plan to help open Ontario up for manufacturing and investment: There is going to be an incredible renaissance for manufacturing jobs in North America. The Americans believe they can capture five million new manufacturing jobs. But I do lament the fact that in the recent Wynne Liberal throne speech, they had no ideas for bringing manufacturing jobs back to our province. The entire topic of manufacturing's decline was absent from their paper.

The minister says all these jobs are coming. Minister, we've seen GM putting investment now in Michigan, Caterpillar heading to Indiana, and John Deere putting investment in Wisconsin. Why in the world, given this crisis in manufacturing, would you have no mention whatsoever of a potential manufacturing renaissance in your throne speech?

Hon. Charles Sousa: This is a very interesting question, coming from the same man and the same party who voted against supporting our manufacturing sector. We were the only party that stood for the manufacturing sector, that supported the auto industry, which you called

corporate welfare and which we call helping our businesses and the people of Ontario.

We now have one of the strongest auto manufacturing sectors still, because of our partnership and because of our involvement. We will continue to do that with all other sectors of Ontario so that we promote not only manufacturing but also financial services and other sectors that are essential to the strength of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I would ask that the minister make a bit more effort on his homework, respectfully. When we hear that the Big Three—GM, Ford and Chrysler—are all looking to invest in the United States and looking to invest in Mexico and they have not promised one new job here in the province of Ontario, that should tell you, as finance minister, that something has gone dangerously off the rails.

Let me give you an example. We brought forward a bold plan to kick-start job creation across the economy, including in manufacturing. Unlike the Liberals and their partners in the NDP, who think manufacturing is a thing of the past, we believe in a bright future for the manufacturing sector, to rebuild our middle class and make our province strong.

Minister, one of the things you could do: We put out a plan to reduce the number of regulations, the red tape, this thicket of runaround they have to go through, by a minimum of a one-third reduction in regulations. If we failed to do so, I would dock my cabinet's pay; I would dock my pay as Premier as well. Will you commit to following this outstanding policy to motivate job creation and investment in manufacturing in the great province of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm pleased that the leader of the official opposition had an opportunity this morning to have a media availability. Perhaps it gave him the opportunity also to explain why the PC Party opposed our tax cuts, making investments in manufacturing and other industries in Ontario very competitive. Perhaps he had a chance to talk to the media and explain why the PCs opposed the auto restructuring investment that supported and saved over 485,000 jobs in our manufacturing sector. Perhaps he had the opportunity to explain to the media why the PC Party opposed our Advanced Manufacturing Investment Strategy, which has created or retained 5,800 jobs in 29 communities across—

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

While I accept that as the answer, at that moment I was also hearing too much from both sides. Again, I remind you that when you're putting the question I would like the same side to be quiet, when you're putting the answer I would like the same side to be quiet; and when you're putting the answer I'd like this side to be quiet,

and when you're putting the question I'd like this side to be quiet. Amazing. It can be done.

New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, in January alone Ontario's private sector lost 48,000 jobs—the largest number of job losses to this province since the Great Depression. On top of this, just this week, Minister, we're seeing more anti-Alberta sentiment from your government and more anti-resource jobs for Ontario. You are continually slamming the province of Alberta for Ontario's woes.

Minister, our white paper, *An Agenda for Growth*, outlines specific steps the Ontario government can take in order to stop this downward trend and make Ontario a leader in manufacturing again. Can you outline any reasons why you haven't incorporated any of our growth ideas?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be clear: Ontario has recovered 415,700 net new jobs since the recession. Ontario has recovered 156% of those jobs lost since the recession, whereas in the US it's only been about 65%. A majority of those new jobs are in high-paying, value-added employment, and we recognize that Ontario is still one of the most attractive destinations for investment. We are outpacing every other jurisdiction, pretty well, in North America. I should say this: For 13 consecutive quarters in a row consumer spending has gone up, and manufacturing sales have been over 36% higher than the recessionary lows.

We are doing our part; we're working closely with all stakeholders to improve Ontario's fortunes and prosperity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Minister, your government's deliberate decisions have cost us 300,000 manufacturing jobs in 10 years, while you've added 300,000 jobs to the government payroll. This month will mark the 75th month that Ontario's unemployment rate is higher than the national average. Many other jurisdictions, including the United States, have lower labour costs than Ontario, which is why we have seen production leaving the province only to cross the border.

We have proposed labour reforms that put power and choice back into the hands of individual employees, not union bosses. In June 2012, GM announced that their consolidated line will close and production of the Chevy Impala will be moved to Detroit, Michigan, while production of the Chevy Equinox will be moved to Springville, Tennessee.

Minister, why haven't you incorporated any of our policies to make our labour costs competitive, so companies like General Motors won't leave this province?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, again, this party is talking about supporting our manufacturing sector without really supporting them. When we put forward initiatives to help the automotive industry, you voted

against them. When we sought your support in order to provide for those jobs and cut those taxes, you voted against them. We will continue to do what's necessary to support our industries with or without you.

I do hope that you will participate in trying to put forward a budget that's going to be there for the benefit of the public, not the benefit of any political party.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement—ary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Listen, your record of job losses in this province is nothing to be proud of; I can assure you of that. Some 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost in this province in 10 years, while you've added 300,000 to the public sector—absolutely shameful.

Ontario's loss of manufacturing jobs has not been unique globally. Manufacturing employment also fell over the past decade in powerhouses like Germany and South Korea.

Unlike in Ontario, experts are predicting a prolonged period of low energy costs for the United States, especially as a result of newly accessible deposits of oil and gas such as Marcellus shale. Many US states are also moving toward pro-job creation labour policies, giving workers a choice as to whether or not to join a union.

Minister, my final question is simple: If you do not plan to incorporate any of our pro-job creation policies while other jurisdictions are moving forward, what specific policy—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Finance?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Here we are again. I appreciate the premise of your question, because what you said this time is, in fact, that the world is suffering. We've had recessions right across the globe. Many of them are even more impacted than we are in Ontario. We felt it quick, we felt it fast, and we took immediate action to protect our industries—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton, you can whisper it, but it's still not quiet.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we moved forward to try to make some support mechanisms to help our businesses, to provide more opportunity—not more government—to create those jobs by the private sector, you voted against it. You voted against the very economic development plans that we've brought forward in eastern and southwestern Ontario to promote those very businesses that you speak of. We'll continue to do what we have to do to support our manufacturing, to support our businesses, with or without you.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Deputy Premier. The government currently plans to start phasing in a new tax loophole for Ontario's largest corporations,

which will allow them to stop paying the HST on a variety of items. Is this still part of the province's future fiscal plan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to revenue tools, I think the NDP leader has to have a conversation with her caucus members. I would urge that she have a conversation with the MPP for Parkdale—High Park, the MPP for Trinity—Spadina, the MPP for Davenport, the MPP for Toronto—Danforth. I think these members of her caucus are owed a frank and open conversation with the leader of the NDP about whether or not they want more transit built in Toronto.

The NDP have been supporters of public transit for as long as I can remember, but now when it comes to actually figuring out a way to pay for it, they seem to have lost their courage. So I'm just asking the member, have that chat with your caucus members.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, that's a lovely piece of advice. I talk regularly to my caucus members, and we also listen to the people of Ontario—something this government doesn't do.

The Minister of Finance knows that New Democrats don't want this tax loophole to be opened, and we don't think it's fair. Now, he has indicated to the House very clearly that he's looking into the issue. Does he have a progress report for us on what he's seen since he started looking?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question and, again, I appreciate the involvement and the engagement of the third party in providing some assistance and some advice.

A good idea is a good idea. I don't care where it comes from, as long as we're working for the benefit of the people of Ontario. The issues around tax avoidance and tax compliance and tax loopholes are something that we are taking very seriously, and we have addressed it with the federal government. You may well know that Minister Flaherty also introduced some of that in his federal budget in response to the very issues that we as Ontario, together with the NDP, have asked for. We'll continue to do our bit to close those loopholes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement—ary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This new tax loophole will give Ontario's largest corporations and financial institutions an opportunity to get the HST taken off their heat and their hydro, their company vehicles, their telecommunication costs, their meals and their entertainment. In tough economic times, does the minister really think it's fair to set aside over a billion dollars for tax loopholes like this one?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. As I've said repeatedly, we are addressing those concerns around tax avoidance and also around tax credits and the way we're going to address them. Dr. Drummond, in our commission, also reported on some of these issues, and

we're taking them seriously. We're going to address it, and I again thank you for your involvement.

1050

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Deputy Premier: We've been pretty clear that there are better ways to create jobs and promote investment in this province. The minister says that he wants a budget that's fair and balanced. The government is scrambling for money: They're building casinos, they're laying off nurses. Does he think that while households are struggling in this province, in tough economic times, that we should actually make it a priority to give an HST bonanza to Ontario's largest corporations by opening a new corporate tax loophole? That's their plan. Are they going to go forward with it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have gone out of our way to make our taxes more competitive than most jurisdictions in North America and the OECD countries. We've reduced personal and consumer taxes. We're reducing taxes, and have reduced them, for corporate and, especially, small businesses that are hiring more people and investing more in Ontario. That's the key: trying to make all those decisions to promote more jobs so that the people of Ontario are working. We will continue to do what's best in the interests of the people of Ontario. As I said, we're addressing any issues of tax loopholes that would prejudice that issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, gee, Speaker, we don't have very many good jobs left in this province, and we don't have any money for infrastructure, so I guess their plan has worked out pretty darn well, hasn't it?

The average household budget in this province has taken some hits in recent years. They are paying some of the highest electricity bills in the entire country, the highest auto insurance in the nation and an HST that leaves them paying a new tax on gasoline, home heating and more, and now the Premier is indicating that she may be asking them to dig even deeper.

Does the minister think it's fair to ask everyday households to continue to pay more and more and more while telling Ontario's largest corporations that it's "HST off everything" for them?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I can't believe that the leader of the third party is disparaging Ontario, saying that we don't have good jobs for the citizens of this great province. In fact, since the bottom of the recession, Mr. Speaker, we have created 415,700 net new jobs. That's better than the United States and better than the United Kingdom. In fact, in this global downturn, it's one of the best records across the globe.

I want to just mention as well, because I think the leader of the third party will be interested in this, that Hamilton in particular has benefited from our invest-

ments and has attracted more industrial and commercial development than any other city in Canada over the past year—and this is not according to the government; this is according to Site Selection magazine.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, maybe the government hasn't travelled to Windsor lately—or London, where unemployment is 9.1%. Maybe they don't realize that it's the government of Ontario that's making it worse, because they're laying off people at casinos, they're laying off people throughout the horse racing industry, they're laying off nurses and front-line health care workers. They're making the problem worse.

People are feeling like they're the ones being left behind. They're feeling like they're being ignored. They see casinos being forced on their communities. They see their bills that continue to climb higher and higher. They see their government asking them to get ready to dig deeper again. They're paying more, and they see Ontario's largest corporations—which is the point—getting more than a billion dollars in new tax breaks, new tax loopholes opening up for them.

When is the minister and this government going to admit that this is not fair and is completely unbalanced?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I referenced Site Selection magazine a moment ago, and I want to say as well that not just, in particular, with regard to Hamilton—but Site Selection magazine has actually ranked Ontario as the most competitive province in Canada for the last three years, and that's because we have all the fundamentals of a sound and strong economy. We have a competitive workforce. We have a competitive infrastructure. We have a competitive tax structure. We have the presence of innovation in research and development. We encourage local job creation. And we have a reliable, clean and modern energy system to support business. Of course, we're focusing more and more on our export and trade opportunities.

In sum total, Mr. Speaker, we have a province to be proud of. We're working hard as a government to create jobs, and we're showing the results.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Attorney General. In the last Parliament, you quietly passed an omnibus bill naively named Open for Business that included repealing section 12.3 of the Professional Engineers Act, known in the manufacturing sector as the industrial exception. This change is of serious concern to 25 associations representing over 700 employees across Ontario because you've not consulted with the industry on what will qualify as professional engineering under the new rules. The manufacturing sector is worried that by removing the industrial exception, you are once again imposing additional red tape and overhead costs on manufacturers when they can least afford it.

Under your government in the last decade, Ontario has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. How can you justify

repealing the industrial exception and adding more red tape on our manufacturing sector without a full analysis of the cost implications?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I appreciate the question from the member. As the member well knows, we are the only province that has an industrial exception for engineers. You may also be interested in knowing that, yes, there was a regulation passed, but we put it on hold for at least another six months so that we can continue to consult with the manufacturing industry and so that we can continue to consult with the individuals that are affected by this. We are still looking at it. It's not a fait accompli, and we will get back to you in due course on this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, you may—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll just take a pause for a second. Thank you.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, you may also know that Ontario is the only province that has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs under your government. It is an implication that if you remove section 12.3 you are, in fact, handcuffing innovation and creativity with our manufacturers that they use every day to create jobs and successfully compete around the world.

Will you commit today to leave the industrial exception in place, which, by the way, has been in place for 29 years, and let our manufacturers get on with the business of creating jobs and building our communities?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As I mentioned before, Speaker, one of the reasons why we are still continuing to consult is that, quite frankly, we weren't happy with the result that was reached in changing the regulation. We will be consulting with industry, we will be consulting with those individuals that are going to be involved, and we will be consulting with the professional engineers as well.

Just for the record, as she well knows, we are the only jurisdiction in Canada that has the industrial exception. We are looking at it right now, and a decision will be made within the next six months on the issue.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Last October, New Democrats requested documents from the Premier's office related to the gas plant scandal that came under the code name Project Vapour. We were told that no such documents existed, in spite of the fact that we held some of them in our hands.

This morning an executive assistant in Cabinet Office confirmed that Project Vapour meetings were held with the Premier's chief of staff and that she saw correspondence in Cabinet Office with the title Project Vapour. It's clear that you had Project Vapour documentation flying around the Premier's office, yet we're told they don't exist.

Can the Premier square the circle?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I know that the honourable member would never want to leave the impression that he's talking about a request from the committee. He's talking about a freedom-of-information request. As the honourable member is aware, there's a process by which members of this House or members of the public can ask for documents under freedom of information. If they are dissatisfied with the response they get, there are appeal mechanisms that are available.

When you go back as a committee context, what I find very strange is that the government went forward to the committee and offered to provide all documents government-wide, far beyond any of the scope of anything that had been requested in the past. To my astonishment, to my surprise, that member, along with the opposition colleagues, raised their hands to vote against that very motion which would have given him all the documents that he had requested.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, there's a big difference between saying you'll be open and actually being open. Ontarians want a little more transparency from their government.

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Deputy Premier, will you commit to releasing today the documents we requested under freedom of information and that in fact we had testimony today saying exist?

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, I'm sure the honourable member is aware, as are all honourable members, that if they have made a request under freedom of information and are dissatisfied with the response, there are appeal mechanisms and avenues they can follow.

But again, I listened very intently to the honourable member's question, and I heard no explanation why he and members of the opposition—when government members put forward a motion to produce all gas plant documents across the government, including the offices of the Premier and the Cabinet Office, those individuals put their hands up and voted against it.

As I've said in the past, I actually called the legislative television service to say there was something wrong with my television coverage because I could not believe that they would vote against something that would have benefited them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock.

I may or may not be right about this, but there is a possibility that someone is using props in this House. It is my duty to remind all members that props are not allowed in this place; nor is it my responsibility, if I don't see it, to guess that it happened, but if it does happen again, the props will be removed and the member will be admonished.

New question?

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the minister responsible for the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games. The upcoming games are a once-in-a-lifetime opportu-

ity to showcase Ontario to many tens of thousands of athletes and visitors. In my riding of Ajax–Pickering and across the province, it is important to have world-class sports facilities for our athletes to compete in and for us to showcase to the world. As one of the world's largest multi-sports events, I understand the games will attract 10,000 athletes and officials from 41 countries and will host competitions in 51 high-performance sports.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What types of facilities can we expect in my riding and in other ridings in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member from Ajax–Pickering for his question. The member is right that there will be 41 countries and 10,000 contestants coming to Ontario in 2015. On top of that, there will be 250,000 visitors, plus Ontario will train 20,000 volunteers. Again, we will stimulate economic growth as well. It will create and support about 15,000 jobs and invest more than \$700 million in new and improved sports facilities and legacy support.

Other facilities like the new Markham Pan Am and Parapan Am centre, where badminton, table tennis and water polo competitions will be held, will ensure that our next generation of champions and contenders can compete.

I'm pleased to advise that the town of Ajax has been selected to host softball and baseball competitions—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: It is good to know we are investing to ensure that Ontario will have world-class sports facilities for generations to come. I can tell you how enlightening it is to see how sports can inspire our creativity and our sense of identity. That is why it is also important to prepare for the games with special events leading up to them, much like our government has done with the War of 1812 bicentennial, so that Ontarians everywhere can get a chance to celebrate the upcoming Pan Am milestone.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the government indicate what special events are being hosted to promote the upcoming Pan Am and Parapan American Games?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question again. I'm pleased to say that this past weekend, I had the opportunity to welcome the renowned sport artist David Arriago to the Ontario junior A badminton championships for a special celebration of the Pan Am Mural Experience. The unveiling of this artistic mural was a great example of capturing and celebrating the cultural sporting history of communities hosting the 2015 games. Inspired by images and themes sent from venue locations, the mural and others will visit their municipalities for planned celebratory events, allowing community members to add their personal paint stroke.

Much like the Olympic torch, these travelling works of art will capture the diversity that the games represent.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Deputy, on September 25 last year, you stood in

this very House and talked about the gas plant documents. You stated, "The request has been complied with. The documents have been tabled. The work is done."

But at that very time, you knew that no Project Vapour documents had been released to the committee. Yet this morning at the justice committee, Tiffany Turnbull from the Cabinet Office told us she was aware of Project Vapour as early as 2011.

Deputy, how can you tell us we had all the documents when even the staff of the Cabinet Office were aware of Project Vapour documents nearly two years ago?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think we've been through this before, but let me just quote what Peter Wallace, as secretary of cabinet, told the committee on March 19: "It is my belief that the Ministry of Energy acted in good faith in searching for and producing documents in their possession that they understood were responsive to the committee's request."

But the more interesting question, Mr. Speaker, is why did the honourable member and members of his party and members of the opposition vote against a government motion that was put forward to go beyond the scope of anything that had been asked for before and have the entire government look for gas plant documents and make them available to the committee?

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I sat in my office watching it on television and was beyond astonished to see members of the opposition voting against the production of the very documents that they're asking for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We are also very grateful to Mr. Wallace, as he told us there are indeed more documents coming.

Deputy, the so-called new government looks and sounds a whole lot like the old government. At the justice committee hearings this morning, Tiffany Turnbull testified there was weekly email traffic on Project Vapour-lock, which now refers to Mississauga. Speaker, that shocked the committee, considering there were no Project Vapour-lock documents turned over in the 56,000 documents that we have—not one Project Vapour-lock document.

This is even more proof today there are documents that exist that you don't want us to see. What there is no proof of, Speaker, is that this government is any different from the last. Deputy, when are you going to end this charade and finally turn over all the details of this gas plant scandal?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, listen. This is what the honourable member voted against: "The Standing Committee on Justice Policy directs the government of Ontario, including ministries, ministers' offices, the Cabinet Office and the Office of the Premier; the Ontario Infrastructure and Lands Corp.; and the Ontario Power Authority to produce ... any and all identified paper and electronic files and records, including but not limited to correspondence, briefing notes, emails, memoranda, issue

or House book notes, opinions and submissions, and including any drafts of or attachments to those records...."

Mr. Speaker, he and his colleagues sat in their chairs and raised their hands in the air and voted against that very motion. If anyone has some explaining to do, it's that member of the opposition.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Finance. In 2010, this government made changes to the auto insurance industry, which slashed benefits for consumers by 50%. As a result, this saved the industry \$2 billion annually, yet in the past two years the premiums that auto insurance drivers pay have gone up 5%. On Wednesday, tomorrow, this House will have a chance to pass on part of these savings to the drivers of Ontario by voting for a motion which would direct FSCO to pass on, in a gradual increment, 15% reductions to auto insurance premiums for the drivers of Ontario. Does this government finally plan to give drivers in Ontario a break by voting in favour of this motion to reduce auto insurance by 15% in this province?

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Hon. Charles Sousa: We share the same concerns that our members from the third party have—and I'm sure members of all parties in this House and the people of Ontario—to ensure that we have very competitive and affordable insurance premiums. We also recognize on this side of the House, as I'm sure you do, that the cost of insurance has gone up even more dramatically than it should have. We need to get at those root causes and address the fraud.

I appreciate you taking the opportunity to do it on a gradual approach so that we can resolve those matters and work in conjunction with the industry to ensure that we reduce the cost and reduce the premiums over time. It's in the best interests of all concerned.

One more thing, however: We actually decreased auto insurance last year by a small percentage and it has actually gone up below the rate of inflation. But we need to do better, and I appreciate what you're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The issue is that the industry has actually saved; the costs have gone down. Over two years, the industry has saved \$4 billion. The savings have already occurred.

What I'm asking the government today is, is the government finally prepared to be on the side of drivers in Ontario by reducing auto insurance premiums by 15%? Tomorrow, they have a chance to vote in favour of a motion which would direct FSCO to encourage 15% reductions in a gradual manner to reduce rates for insurance for drivers of Ontario.

Is the government prepared to be in favour of auto insurance, to be in favour of drivers for once instead of insurance companies, and to pass on some fairness to drivers here in Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we share those concerns. In fact, we share the concerns of all Ontarians, especially those who aren't affected by the same degree of auto insurance hikes as they are, say, in the 905 region, in which the member opposite and I reside. But we recognize the implications that may have on the north and other parts of the province, so we've got to be fair to all people of Ontario.

I should also say that it was this side of the House that implemented the Anti-Fraud Task Force so that we could get at those root causes to ensure that we do the right thing.

I appreciate what the member is saying. I appreciate what you're putting forward, which I believe is tomorrow. We will look at your proposals and we will work with you, together, to ensure that we reduce auto insurance premiums for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

HYDRO OPERATIONS

Mr. Kim Craiton: My question is for the Minister of Energy.

Niagara Falls is one of the greatest natural wonders of the world and we're lucky enough to have it right here in Ontario. One of the biggest benefits is its ability to generate a constant source of clean hydroelectric power, and it has been doing so for over 100 years.

Over the past few years, this government has been working on the construction of the Niagara tunnel to increase the capacity of the falls for hydroelectric power and to provide clean, renewable energy for thousands of homes. Last Thursday at the Sir Adam Beck generating plant, the Niagara tunnel in-service announcement took place.

Could the Minister of Energy update the House and the people of Ontario on the status of this project?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. The member has been a very strong advocate for this project.

Our government's commitment to renewable energy is unparalleled. That is why I was pleased to announce the completion of the Niagara tunnel project last week in Niagara Falls. This 10-kilometre Niagara tunnel will harness the power of Niagara Falls, channelling water from the Niagara River to the Sir Adam Beck generating station. Water will travel through this four-storey tunnel at a rate fast enough to fill an Olympic swimming pool in seconds.

This is the largest hydroelectric project to come to Ontario in the last 50 years and it will provide clean, renewable, affordable energy for the next 100 years. We're looking to the future and building on our government's strong record of investing in renewable power across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kim Craiton: Thank you, Minister, for the update. The Niagara tunnel is truly a landmark project for the province, and it reaffirms our commitment to renewable energy. As my good friend the mayor of Niagara

Falls, Jim Diodati, said, "The renewable capital of Canada is right here in Niagara Falls."

I know that this government has made numerous investments in wind, solar and hydroelectric power across the province. In fact, we are the renewable-energy leader in North America.

I know that the Niagara tunnel is just one of the many hydroelectric projects across this province. Minister, could you please inform the House and the people of Ontario on other projects and what is going on to expand hydroelectric power in Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member is right. Our government's record investments in renewable energy have made us a leader in North America. I'm proud to say that we are proceeding with projects to redevelop and expand some of our aging hydroelectric fleet. This will increase the amount of clean, renewable energy we provide across the province.

By 2018, we expect to have 9,000 megawatts of hydroelectric capacity in place across the province. The Lower Mattagami River project will have 800 jobs at its peak and will be the largest hydro project in northern Ontario in 40 years. It's also a partnership with the Moose Cree First Nation.

In fact, most of Ontario's water power potential comes from the north. Hydroelectricity is affordable and emission-free, and we look forward to working with our First Nations partners in developing viable and appropriate hydro projects.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is to the energy minister. During testimony this morning, yet another employee privy to the inner workings of cabinet and the Premier's office delivered the latest blow to a government badly damaged by the gas plant scandal that continues to spiral out of control.

Tiffany Turnbull testified that she received at least one email per week on Project Vapour-lock, yet we haven't seen any of those documents. In fact, in the document dump of the 56,000 pages, the words "Project Vapour-lock" don't appear at all. So, in seeing that the Premier has thrown down the gauntlet on transparency and claims that she has opened up her government for all to see, how is it possible that witnesses are still testifying that we don't have all the requested documents on your gas plant scandal?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I have here in my hands, since the honourable member wants to continue, some of the 56,000 pages that were tabled with the committee. Here is an email from Joseph Silva at energy to Jesse Kulendran. Let me quote: "The crowd from this morning's Vapour-lock briefing know about this briefing to be set up. Rebecca—could you find time with Maria," etc., etc.

Here's one from David Lindsay to Joseph Silva: "Subject: Vapour-lock."

Here we have one from David Lindsay to Joseph Silva: "A meeting has been scheduled today that will take place in Shelley's office, main Legislative Building. Would you kindly ensure your DMs are in attendance?" Wait for this: The subject is "Vapour-lock."

I think the honourable member had better reread the 56,000 pages that were given to the committee before he stands in this House and makes these false allegations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Back to the energy minister. Just as disturbing as the fact that there are still more documents out there, are the steps that this government has taken to take the Premier out of this scandal.

Further to Ms. Turnbull's testimony, she told the committee that she had "received direction" from members of the Cabinet Office on how to answer questions. She initially claimed that she did not know what the acronym "PO" stood for in the document that she in fact authored herself. Then, reluctantly and through intense questioning, she changed her story and told us what every government employee making over \$100,000 on the sunshine list should know: that PO actually stands for the Premier's office.

Why would a former employee be told not to be forthright about the involvement of the Premier and her office in this scandal?

Hon. John Milloy: It's one thing to have the cut and thrust—I must say, in this job my skin is as thick as an elephant's. But I've got to tell you, when a citizen of this province comes before a committee and we witness the drive-by smear that we just heard—do you know what the woman said to the committee? Mr. Leone said, "What kind of direction did you receive from legal counsel?" Ms. Turnbull said, "Really, that I just had the five minutes for my opening statement and what to sort of expect for the set-up of the room. There was no discussion about content." Mr. Leone: "Did they advise you of things not to say in committee?" Ms. Turnbull: "No. They advised me of process-type things."

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Mr. Speaker, what that member has just done is reprehensible, and he should stand on his feet and apologize to a private citizen who came forward before a committee this morning to give of her time and give testimony. The fact that it didn't comply with what he thought is not her fault; it's his problem.

CASINOS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question's for the Deputy Premier. This government's all in on modernization plans for the OLG, even as 38 people got dealt right out of their jobs yesterday at Windsor's Caesars casino. That's 38 families who've just lost a regular paycheck; 38 families who face agonizing choices in the coming days. How many more Windsor families will go bust because of this government's big gamble?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The question begs this response: You've just highlighted the concerns that are happening in those border towns and casinos that are being affected. We need to do something to transform and modernize the system.

OLG has tried to provide another \$1.3 billion more in revenue and access. It's also going to employ an additional 6,000 employees, I believe it is. These are the kinds of things that we need to do in order to strengthen our system. That is what we're aiming for.

We also take note that it is unfortunate that this is occurring in those border facilities, and that's why we have to take stands to protect those jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the government's plan is actually going to kill the border casinos. This is no game of chance. Livelihoods are at stake here. Some 38 people have already lost their jobs at Windsor's Caesars casino. Odds are this number goes up if the government goes ahead with its OLG modernization gamble.

Will the Deputy Premier stop rolling the dice with jobs in Windsor until people can have a real say about new casino development?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, it's terribly unfortunate that's what's happening. I know that the increased competition coming from Ohio is having a huge impact on Windsor. That's why we have to take the steps necessary. These are very difficult decisions, but they're being made to support Windsor, to support the employees and the staff that are there. We need to take these steps.

Your response is, "Do nothing." Doing nothing is creating the situation that we have before us. We're taking the steps necessary to modernize, to transform, to build those jobs and protect the industry.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is to the Minister of Education. Many of my constituents have been coming to me with questions about our government's work on child care. For my constituents, child care is essential for their child's development. It offers our children an opportunity to be social and learn important interactive skills. For many of our young ones, child care is the first step in their pursuit of lifelong learning. For many families, child care provides parents with the security of knowing that their child is safe and cared for while they are at work. It's important that my constituents know what this government is doing to provide quality and accessible child care in Ontario.

To the Minister of Education: Please inform this House on the work that is being done to provide sustainable child care in Ontario.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Ottawa—Orléans for this important question, and thank you to the member for his advocacy on behalf of his constituents and for access to child care.

Our government is working hard to enhance the quality and accessibility of child care so that our children can have access to the best-quality care. As we work towards that goal, it is so important that we hear from child care operators themselves and gather important data that can help us for the future.

That's why, in July 2012, our government launched a questionnaire which gathered important information from licensed care facilities. The survey asked important questions about child care operations, fees, wages and finances. My ministry has posted a summary of the results from this survey on the ministry website, and the information will inform policy—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I agree that gathering information from our licensed child care operators is an important way to get a better understanding of child care in Ontario. I'm quite happy to hear as well that our government has important data that will help us continue to improve child care in Ontario.

According to a recent TD Economics report, investments in early childhood education help improve a child's development. I know that many of our child care operators are adapting to the implementation of full-day kindergarten. Full-day kindergarten is such an important tool that will give our young students an essential start to their education, including my two grandchildren, who have just completed it.

But child care also plays a significant role in early learning. Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister please elaborate on the government's programs that will make sure that child care continues to play an essential role in early learning?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Speaker, since 2003 our government has increased funding for child care by almost 90%. In that process, we've helped create nearly 90,000 licensed child care spaces.

Our government is committed to working with our partners to stabilize and modernize child care to ensure that families and children have access to high-quality programs and care. One of the steps we've taken was the release of our discussion paper *Modernizing Child Care in Ontario: Sharing Conversations, Strengthening Partnerships, Working Together*. This was released in June 2012. We're seeking input on strengthening.

We have also changed the funding model to a funding model that now reflects the demographics of a community.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Minister of Energy. The Liberals' throne speech talks about suddenly wanting to work with municipalities. It talks about respecting local decision-making when it comes to energy infrastructure development like wind turbines. It stresses the need to have willing host communities. Well, Minister, the Premier is visiting a non-willing host com-

munity as we speak. My community is definitely not a willing host community.

Minister, will the government do anything to make good on its throne speech promise and place an immediate moratorium on any further wind farm development?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the question was asked a week or so ago as well. I indicated at that time that the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Rural Affairs are working on some changes that would allow municipalities to have much more control over the siting of energy projects in the community.

Wind power is a part of our long-term energy plan. It will continue to be part of our long-term energy plan, but it will be with a lot more control by municipalities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Again to the Minister of Energy: It sounds like the Liberals forgot to include the fine print in the throne speech, which states, "Applies only to gas plants in the GTA where Liberal seats are at risk."

Minister, across Ontario, including Perth–Wellington, there are proposals for industrial wind turbine projects that are strongly opposed by the host local communities. Your government has dragged its feet on calling the throne speech to a vote; however, you do have a choice to respect local decision-making. Minister, will you respect communities in rural Ontario and support the PCs' call for a moratorium on all wind turbine projects immediately?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. How about some quiet?

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I respect the fact that the member is speaking on behalf of his community. He's hearing from his community.

The reason why that statement was in the speech from the throne is because the Premier is listening to communities across the province of Ontario, and we are responding. We are working diligently with the three ministries. We are creating some options that will be brought forward in the very near future. We are committed to having more control in the hands of local communities. I appreciate the question from the member.

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ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, you know that people in northern Ontario have been upset at your government for the move to privatize the ONTC. People across the north—be it municipalities, be it workers, be it shippers, be it passengers—don't agree that privatization is the option.

There was a Liberal leadership race in which a number of your leadership candidates said that they were prepared to put a pause on privatization and consult with

northerners when it comes to what we do with the ONTC. We see that you formed the committee, but according to your particular comments on Monday, the northern transportation commission is still on the auction block.

You're trying to position yourself as a new Ontario government. Can you tell me what's new about that position?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the opportunity to respond. I was very much pleased to be in North Bay yesterday for the first gathering of the ministerial advisory committee for the discussions related to a number of stakeholders to help us make the right decisions related to the divestment of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission: municipal leaders, First Nations, Métis, industry—various stakeholders that obviously are going to help us make decisions related to how we do this the right way. Certainly, the discussion was an open one, a very transparent one and, I think, one that we can lead forward. We think there's a great opportunity for the people that are on that committee to help advise us as to how we can move forward.

It's a very tough decision related to the divestment of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. The priority for the Premier—made very, very clear—was that we need to make sure that we put in place a northern transportation strategy that makes sense for northerners and meets the economic development needs that are there in the northeast, and that's indeed what we intend to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This government is trying to say they're a new Ontario government. I fail to see what is new in this. The only thing that's new: You've taken the mayors of northern Ontario and you've said, "Please help us privatize this entity." That's not what northerners want and that's not what New Democrats have called for. What we've asked you to do is to put a pause on this entire thing and to give northerners an ability to look at the ONTC and how we can run it as a publicly funded corporation, as we do with GO Transit and many other such entities across this province.

I ask you again: Will you not pause the privatization of the ONTC, once and for all?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: What we're committed to—and I believe the members on that side of the House are committed as well, as we all are—is having a sustainable transportation system in northeastern Ontario. We all know that there were significant dollars spent in terms of the ONTC, a heavily subsidized operation. We believe that this can be done in a better way, and quite frankly, I believe the members of the ministerial advisory committee can provide us with that advice as well. How can we, for example, set up criteria for potential future divestment that make sense so that we can meet those goals of making sure that a transportation system or a telecommunication system in the north is one that's sustainable over the long term and can provide the kind of employment opportunities that we know are so important to everybody in the northeast? We are very committed to

this; Premier Wynne is very committed to this. We set this up as a—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, last Friday marked World Water Day. World Water Day draws attention to one of our most valuable resources: clean water. Clean drinking water is essential to the well-being of every Ontarian. Conserving our water supplies and protecting our water quality are crucial to the health of our families, our communities and our economy. As a former public health nurse, I know the importance of ongoing research, testing and evaluation of current drinking water systems throughout the province.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of the Environment: Can he please inform the House of the improvements our government has made on the current water system?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd be happy to do that.

In 2007, we announced that we had implemented all 121 of Justice O'Connor's recommendations. We achieved there an important milestone in the turnaround of our drinking water. Since 2003, we've accomplished a great deal regarding the state of drinking water in Ontario. We've hired an additional 39 drinking water inspection staff. We established the Walkerton Clean Water Centre, which has trained over 37,000 water professionals and 500 municipal decision-makers. Under the Drinking Water Stewardship Program, over 3,000 local, on-the-ground projects have been completed to protect water supplies. We've invested over \$200 million in source protection planning since 2006.

These are just a few examples of the hard work we have undertaken to restore the public's confidence in drinking water, and I look forward to elaborating on the results in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to hear the update on all the hard work this government has done on the water system. It is impressive to hear how far we have come in the last 10 years. As stewards of the largest supply of fresh water in the world, it is important that we strive to achieve the best results for people living in Ontario, as well as for generations to come.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please elaborate on the results of all of this hard work and what we are doing to continue to build upon the gains we have made?

Hon. James J. Bradley: These strategic investments and initiatives have produced some very impressive results. In 2010-11, 99.87% of drinking water test reports by municipal residential systems met our health-based standard. We were the only province to score an A on Ecojustice's most recent report card on drinking water. In 2011, the Canadian Water Attitudes Study showed that

91% of people in Ontario are confident about the safety and quality of their drinking water.

While we could be content with that, we won't rest on those laurels. Our Showcasing Water Innovation program, announced in 2007, is supporting leading-edge, innovative and cost-effective solutions for managing drinking water, waste water and stormwater systems. We partnered with the federal government to launch the Canada-Ontario First Nations Drinking Water Quality Improvement Initiative and created the Water Technology Acceleration Project to bring together industry, academics and government.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Timmins-James Bay has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines concerning privatization of the ONTC. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as members are aware, there is an opportunity to correct your record in this Legislature. This morning, the member from Nipissing clearly said that no Project Vapour documents had been released to the committee. That obviously was not the case—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're half right: Members are allowed to correct their own record. I'm not amused. Everybody has been here long enough to know that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm waiting for a little bit of quiet.

I would encourage everyone to use that standing tradition to correct your own record and stop trying to correct somebody else's.

The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: On a point of order, Speaker: We heard from Tiffany Turnbull this morning that there indeed were emails between the energy ministry and CAB, the cabinet board, but even the emails that we read this morning show that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): What you are presently saying is not a point of order. Are you correcting a record?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Oh, no. I was referring to the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As a reminder to all members, your microphones get turned off as soon as I—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton will withdraw.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Look, I don't know how many times I have to say this, but when we do get quiet, having people interject when it's quiet is very insulting to me. Thank you.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Speaker. They're not here yet, but I know that they will be sitting in the west members' gallery very, very soon.

Mr. Todd Smith: Here they are.

Mr. Steve Clark: There they are. They're coming in here now. I'm very pleased to introduce to members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario a number of my guests that include Dr. Ron Yim, who is on the board of directors of the Ontario Dental Association; Dr. Raffy Chouljian, who is also on the board of directors of the Ontario Dental Association; Dr. Lynn Tomkins, Ms. Maureen Black and Mr. Frank Bevilacqua from the Ontario Dental Association. I also want to introduce Maggie Head from the ODA, although she told me she didn't want to be introduced, and finally Ms. Julie Toole from the Association of Ontario Midwives and Ms. Heather Harding from the Association of Ontario Midwives.

I know my colleague from Burlington also has some introductions of her constituents, but I want to welcome you all to Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm assuming you're assuming that I'm going to identify you as introducing some guests, so: The member from Burlington will introduce some guests.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to welcome two of my constituents to the Legislature. Joining us in the members' gallery this afternoon are Burlington dentist Dr. Larry Pedlar and his wife Margo Pedlar, co-chairs of the Coalition to Restore Spousal Rights and Freedoms. The Pedlars are here to show their support for legislation being introduced by my colleague the member from Leeds–Grenville today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay, introducing guests.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce you to guests from Peawanuck, but because they have to pay \$1,000 to fly from Peawanuck to Timmins and another \$500 to fly down, they couldn't make it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to send a shout-out to them over in Timmins; they didn't quite make it all the way.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm patient. Further introduction of guests?

There being no further introduction of guests, including those that never made it in the first place, it is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I am pleased today to speak about a private member's bill I will be introducing in just a few minutes. The bill, called the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, will do exactly that—give Ontario rate-payers some relief on their energy bills—and it will respect municipal decision-making.

Wind power is one of the most expensive forms of energy generation, mainly because of the costly, highly subsidized Feed-in Tariff, or FIT, program. In this bill, the FIT program will be eliminated, and to ensure that the cost of wind is kept low, the cost per kilowatt hour must line up with other sources of generation.

The PC Party know that local municipalities know what is best for their communities. In the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, municipalities will receive their planning powers for renewable energy back. Wind turbines will only be considered within willing host communities, and municipalities will be given full veto over wind turbine projects. Municipalities will also have the ability to decide whether or not they want to promote wind energy; it will no longer be legislated.

But we also need to protect the environment. This bill does that. For instance, wind turbines will be prohibited on the Niagara Escarpment and Oak Ridges moraine.

The Premier said, just this morning, in Clinton—which is in my riding of Huron–Bruce—that she is looking for a better process for wind turbine development. Well, Premier, here it is. I expect the Premier and her government will vote in support of this better process on April 18. Anything less is totally unacceptable.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Today I rise to highlight a growing concern in the province of Ontario and particularly in the GTA. It's a concern regarding precarious employment: temporary help agencies.

There was a report recently released, It's More Than Poverty, which was put together by PEPSO, McMaster University Social Sciences, and the United Way. This report made a number of findings about the negative impact of precarious employment. In fact, precarious employment is increasing in the GTA. Only 60% of GTA workers have a full-time job. That means 40% of workers in the GTA have precarious employment, employment that is not secure.

They have also found that precarious employment impacts disproportionately new Canadians and immigrant Canadians. Naturally, precarious employment means that these workers earn less and face more uncertainty. This

type of employment negatively impacts the individual, their family and their communities. It has a significant impact. We define ourselves by our jobs, and having precarious employment significantly impacts the way we view ourselves and the way we conduct ourselves in our societies.

This is a serious concern in my riding. In Bramalea-Gore-Malton, many constituents have raised this issue, that precarious employment and temporary help agencies are increasing. There is more and more temporary work, but there is no permanent work. People are struggling to make ends meet because of this, and it's a serious concern.

We need to implement some policy changes so that people can get a permanent job, as opposed to this temporary, precarious type of employment. This is something we need to address soon—now rather than later.

PANDAS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I am pleased to welcome two new residents to my riding of Scarborough—Rouge River. Yesterday, a five-year-old female and a four-year-old male arrived from China. The two giant breeding pandas, Er Shun and Da Mao, are part of a conservation, research and education project. They will be on loan to the Toronto Zoo for a minimum of five years. The pandas will go through a period of quarantine and should be ready to meet the public by May 2013.

Through the Celebrate Ontario 2013 Blockbuster application, the giant panda exhibit received \$500,000 in provincial funding. The giant pandas are expected to attract 1.1 million new visitors over the five years, including 440,000 tourists, and to bring in approximately \$10 million annually to the Toronto Zoo.

The Toronto Zoo, located on the beautiful Rouge River, is one of the largest zoos in the world, occupying 710 acres of land. It is home to 5,000 animals representing over 500 species and offers 10 kilometres of walking trails, plus much more.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome my new residents Er Shun and Da Mao to Ontario and wish the Toronto Zoo success with the giant panda exhibit. It has been over 20 years since we had the giant pandas in Toronto. I encourage everyone to take a family trip to the Toronto Zoo and visit the pandas.

SPRINGWATER PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak about a very important issue that's affecting my riding and the surrounding ridings in Simcoe county: the closure of Springwater Park.

Springwater Park is a park that has been around since the 1930s. I have to say, Speaker, I wasn't even informed as a member, nor were the other members in Simcoe county, of the impending closure of this park. We weren't consulted about it; we weren't informed about it.

In fact, I found out through my own media that this park was closing. I was very disappointed.

There are no parks like Springwater anywhere near Barrie that fill its unique niche. It's a wildlife sanctuary. It's got 12 kilometres of trails. It's essentially just a beautiful park, and there's nothing like it in the area. Certainly it deserves at least, I think, a reprieve of a year where the local residents and the local governments in the city of Barrie and Springwater and, indeed, the county of Simcoe can have an opportunity to come up with some alternate funding methods within the community to try to keep this park open.

As it stands now, this park is destined to close by the end of the week. This is a travesty. This is one of the parks where the actual visitorship has gone up in the past couple of years, not down. There have been voluntary payments at the gate. When this park is so nice, people would gladly pay to help keep it open.

It's my hope, Speaker, that the minister will reconsider his decision to close this park and give the community an opportunity to do what it can to keep this park open.

OPTIMIST CLUB OF EAST LONDON

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It is my pleasure to share with the members of this Legislature an important celebration I attended this past Saturday. The East London Optimist Club celebrated their 50th anniversary, and I was pleased to share in that celebration. The first-ever organizational meeting of the East London Optimist Club was held back on February 13, 1963. Within a year, they created the first Junior Optimist club.

1510

While most people know the East London Optimist Club for their annual Canada Day fireworks celebration, which began back in 1982 at East Lions Park in London, it is the less-known work they do every day to improve the lives of children and families in our community that I want to acknowledge today.

The volunteers of the East London Optimist Club have dedicated themselves to the London community. In 1977, they launched the Helping Hand Program. This vital community program seeks to improve the lives of underprivileged children in London. Over the years, the East London Optimist Club have generously donated their time and financially contributed to a variety of important organizations in London, including the London Centre of the Deaf and the Children's Hospital of London.

These are just a few examples of their incredible work. We know that the success of this organization is due to the people who have dedicated their time to their community. I am so thankful for their efforts, and wish them success for another 50 years.

CLARKSON CUP

Ms. Helena Jaczek: This past weekend, the 2013 Clarkson Cup Tournament was hosted in Markham. Each year, the top four teams in the Canadian Women's

Hockey League compete in a tournament for the Clarkson Cup, which is awarded to the eventual champion.

This year, I had the privilege of taking part in the ceremonial puck drop of a final round robin game between the Boston Blades and the Montreal Stars. These two teams competed on Saturday for the championship game, where Premier Kathleen Wynne dropped the ceremonial puck with former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson, by whom the trophy was created and for whom it was named. Miss Clarkson has been a champion of promoting women in sport, and her advocacy has helped create opportunities for young women who have a passion for hockey, like those who play for the Markham-Stouffville girls' hockey association.

I'm proud to say that my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham was represented in the tournament by Stouffville resident Liz Knox, who plays goalie for the Brampton Thunder.

I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of Markham resident Brad Morris, who is the chair of the Canadian Women's Hockey League, which, with a team of local volunteers and local businesses, made this past weekend a huge success.

Congratulations to all the women who play simply for the love of the game. We look forward to seeing many of you as part of Team Canada at the 2014 Winter Olympic Games.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Ted Arnott: The Guelph Mercury hit the nail on the head in its March 21 editorial on the Highway 6 Morriston bypass. The Mercury concluded, "After so much time, so much effort and ever-increasing traffic, doesn't this project deserve a spot on the province's five-year plan for highway capital projects?"

This is a question that many of my constituents in Puslinch township are also asking. Our community has been waiting for more than 30 years for this project to move forward. In fact, the need for a bypass around Morriston was first identified in the late 1970s. A number of environmental studies were done, but the project itself moved at a snail's pace. Meanwhile, the traffic problems continued to get worse and worse.

Highway 6 is an important economic corridor, linking the 401 to the US border. In 2006, the Minister of Transportation said that this stretch of the highway accounts for 12% of the province's truck traffic.

On February 19, the very first day that the Legislature resumed sitting after being prorogued, I tabled a resolution calling on the Minister of Transportation to put the Highway 6 Morriston bypass onto his ministry's five-year plan for highway construction. The motion is identical to one which I tabled last fall before the prorogation, and I want to thank all the residents of Puslinch township who have been working so hard to advocate for this project, led by their township council and staff.

I want to continue to do whatever I can to support their efforts. I once again urge the Minister of Transpor-

tation to listen to my constituents and put this needed project on his ministry's five-year plan.

LAHORE RESOLUTION

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I want to speak to a historic event that took place over the weekend. Specifically, March 23 marked the 73rd anniversary of the Lahore Resolution, which led to the creation of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. It's really important at many, many levels to recognize this. Of course, it's very important for anybody who's of Pakistani origin.

What the Lahore Resolution did back in 1940 was, it was the very first time that somebody formally put forth the idea of having a Muslim state. Many of us don't know this, but the first Islamic republic wasn't created in the Middle East; it wasn't created in Persia. It was actually created in the Indian subcontinent when Pakistan was formed on August 14, 1947.

This all began with the Lahore Resolution, which in part reads, "No constitutional plan would be workable or acceptable to the Muslims unless geographical contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary."

With this resolution, the dream for an independent Islamic republic, namely Pakistan, started. It would take another seven years for it to come true. For Pakistanis all over the world, this was a red-letter day. They have every right to be very, very proud, and I am here just talking about that.

THOUSAND ISLANDS SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr. Steve Clark: Two dozen high school students from Thousand Islands Secondary School in Brockville are back from a once-in-a-lifetime experience in Nicaragua from February 19 to March 6. This was no ordinary field trip for these grade 11 and 12 students. Living with Nicaraguan families and paying \$9 a day to board with them, they were immersed into the culture and the poverty that's a daily reality for people there. The incredible experience was organized by Thousand Island teachers Brent Robillard and Caroline Bergeron.

Inside tiny cinder-block homes, students quickly realized the comforts of life in Canada were gone. They slept on wood cots, and lizards regularly crawled through cracks in the walls to join them for the night. They also witnessed heartbreaking scenes of child labour in a large garbage dump where young children scoured for scrap plastic and metal.

Amidst this poverty, in a country where the average income is \$2 a day, they saw something else: how these families still enjoyed their love of life. They may not have the material things that we have, but they have love of family, something we perhaps too often take for granted. The impact on them was profound. Many of them skipped an Internet café to catch up with friends at

home. Suddenly, things like Facebook and Twitter were less important to them.

I want to commend Brent and Caroline, two outstanding teachers, who taught their students an invaluable lesson in humanity. These students have been inspired to make a difference here at home and maybe to one day help change the world.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PLANNING AMENDMENT ACT (ENABLING MUNICIPALITIES TO REQUIRE INCLUSIONARY HOUSING), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE (INCLUSION DE LOGEMENTS ABORDABLES PAR LES MUNICIPALITÉS)

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 37, An Act to amend the Planning Act with respect to inclusionary housing / *Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire à l'égard de l'inclusion de logements abordables.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement, please.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Section 34 of the act is amended to allow the councils of local municipalities to pass zoning bylaws to require inclusionary housing in the municipality by mandating that a specified percentage of housing units in new housing developments containing 20 or more housing units must be affordable to low- and moderate-income households.

New section 37.1 of the act deals with inclusionary housing bylaws in greater detail.

Section 51 of the act is amended to allow the approval authority to impose, as a condition of approval of a plan of subdivision, a requirement that a specified percentage of housing units in new housing developments in a subdivision containing 20 or more housing units must be affordable to low- and moderate-income households.

This bill, supported by dozens of municipalities, including Hazel McCallion herself, would provide some 12,000 units of new affordable housing without one tax dollar.

HELPING VOLUNTEERS GIVE BACK ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À AIDER LES BÉNÉVOLES À CONTRIBUER

Ms. Jones moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 38, An Act respecting criminal record checks for volunteers / *Projet de loi 38, Loi concernant les vérifications du casier judiciaire des bénévoles.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement, please.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, the explanatory note is actually quite long, so instead, what I will share with the House is this: My bill would allow a police record check to be used in multiple volunteer organizations. Currently, you need a separate police check for every organization that you choose to volunteer for. This would allow you, on an annual basis, to basically volunteer in multiple agencies.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I appreciate the efforts to read the explanatory notes and I would hold you up as a good example. Thank you, member.

ENSURING AFFORDABLE ENERGY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 FAVORISANT L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE

Ms. Thompson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to provide for control by local municipalities over renewable and affordable energy undertakings / *Projet de loi 39, Loi prévoyant le contrôle des entreprises d'énergie renouvelable et abordable par les municipalités locales.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The explanatory note is a little long, so I'll shorten it up for you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A star, too.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you.

The short title of this bill is the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, and that's exactly what this bill will do. This bill states that wind turbines will only be placed in willing host communities and municipalities will be given a full veto. Wind power must be affordable, meaning the cost per kilowatt hour must line up with other sources of generation. The costly Feed-in Tariff, or FIT, program will be eliminated. Municipalities will have the ability to decide whether or not they want to promote wind energy. The Niagara Escarpment and Oak Ridges moraine will be protected from wind turbines, and municipalities will receive their planning powers for renewable energy back.

REGULATED HEALTH PROFESSIONS
AMENDMENT ACT
(TREATING SPOUSES), 2013
LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES PROFESSIONS
DE LA SANTÉ RÉGLEMENTÉES
(TRAITEMENT DES CONJOINTS)

Mr. Clark moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement, please.

Mr. Steve Clark: The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act, affectionately known by me as “treating spouses”: Currently, subsection 1(3) of the Health Professions Procedural Code, which is a schedule to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, sets out a definition of sexual abuse which includes sexual relations between a patient and a member of the regulated health profession.

The new subsection 1(5) of the code enables each regulated profession to provide by regulation an exemption for such conduct when the patient is also the member’s spouse, and a definition of spouse is also added to the act and applies to all regulated professions.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise today to proudly salute the Volunteer Service Award program. The VSAs are ceremonies held in every corner of Ontario to recognize one of our province’s greatest assets: our volunteers.

Each year, more than five million volunteers give their time, their talent and their compassion to make Ontario a better place to live. It’s often hard work, but they do it because they care. Young, old, newcomer or long-time resident, each one takes action to make life better for others. They support the most vulnerable. They coach our children, cheer our seniors, mentor our newcomers. They care for our environment. These are some of the most energetic, trustworthy and dependable people anywhere, and we’re so lucky they choose to give their best to our communities here in Ontario.

Most of them will say volunteering is just what they do, yet through their service to organizations and their neighbours, they not only improve the quality of life in their communities but also the entire province. They are the heart of our communities.

That’s why we are taking time, through the VSAs, to give these volunteers the thanks they deserve. This year, 52 Volunteer Service Award ceremonies will take place in 38 communities across the province, starting in Stratford on March 20 and finishing in Toronto on June 27. Over 10,000 volunteers will be recognized.

Mr. Speaker, I know that many of my parliamentary colleagues will want to recognize their constituents by attending these events. For those of you who have not had a chance to attend the VSA ceremony or haven’t done so in a while, I strongly encourage you to do so this year.

I also urge my colleagues to have their deserving volunteers nominated in their communities for our other recognition programs such as the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers and the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Awards for Voluntarism. Ceremonies for these programs will be held during National Volunteer Week from April 21 to 27. We will also begin our sixth annual ChangeTheWorld: Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge at the same time.

I’m confident that all members of this Legislature share our vision in keeping Ontario’s volunteer spirit strong and will join me in thanking our volunteers for their outstanding services in our communities.

FINDING YOUR WAY PROGRAM PROGRAMME FINDING YOUR WAY

Hon. Mario Sergio: As part of our government’s Action Plan for Seniors, we have set up a wandering prevention program to help people with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, and their families and caregivers from our diverse communities, to reduce the risk of going missing.

The government of Ontario is proud to join the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, police forces, community representatives and government ministries in an integrated response to a growing challenge: improving safety awareness and preventing missing incidents among individuals with dementia, many of whom are seniors.

Finding Your Way is a new program to help people with dementia who may wander and become lost, while supporting caregivers and communities—the first of its kind in Canada. It’s aimed at helping to save them from harm and potentially life-threatening dangers. With the increase in the number of people with dementia, and their preference to live in their community as long as possible, we have recognized the importance of having a program in place. Seniors, caregivers, the general public—every one of us has an obligation to do our part to ensure the safety and security of people with dementia who wander.

The time for Finding Your Way is now. The number of people with dementia is growing as never before and will increase 40% in less than a decade, from 180,000 to more than a quarter of a million people. Indeed, this is closely linked to the fact that in just five years, there will be more seniors in Ontario than children 14 and younger.

While the likelihood of developing dementia increases with age, we also know that more people are being diagnosed with early-onset dementia at younger ages.

Finding Your Way will improve safety as we educate, involve and empower seniors, their families, caregivers and people throughout the province. We will equip people with information and support, so that they can plan for the future in a way that maximizes choice, independence and safety. The program will help us all work together—the entire community—to become aware of the signs when encountering persons with dementia and other related illnesses who are lost or missing.

With the Alzheimer Society of Ontario and the police, we are developing resources for individuals and families to prevent loved ones from going missing; public education to raise awareness; outreach to communities, with an emphasis on diversity; and training for front-line police officers to recognize and respond to cases involving seniors who have wandered.

1530

The Alzheimer Society will provide tips on what to do when a person goes missing, as well as identification kits that encourage people to document vital statistics and include photographs of their loved ones before they go missing. The society, with its history of dealing with this issue, is leading the public awareness campaign. It will include a broad range of media organizations, engagement with communities and partnering with ethnocultural organizations to extend our information outreach. In particular, the campaign will begin with resources in English, French, Chinese and Punjabi, and expand by introducing resources in Italian, Spanish and Portuguese in 2014.

Speaker, we want everybody, young and old, to know and be aware of wandering risks so that the community responds to help missing seniors. Public safety is our collective concern and shared responsibility. We must recognize and reduce the risk of them going missing.

Monsieur le Président, traitant nos personnes âgées bien et avec les meilleurs soins aujourd'hui sera l'empreinte de pas pour nos personnes âgées de demain. Maintenant, c'est notre temps. C'est notre occasion de faire de l'Ontario la meilleure province et le meilleur endroit où nos personnes âgées peuvent, avec confiance, vieillir en bonne santé, heureuses et dans la dignité et le confort. Après tout, elles le méritent.

Speaker, this program is a good start, and I have to compliment everyone involved. I hope this will be used well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Ministre. It is now time for responses.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise on behalf of the PC caucus to respond to the minister's statement on the Volunteer Service Awards. When we think of volunteers, we often think of Rotary, Lions, Optimists, Kinsmen, Shriners, our churches and our schools. But

there's also a very unusual and special group that keeps our community safe, the St. John Ambulance volunteers, who are at every public event with first aid; and Victim Services, a huge organization province-wide that, quite frankly, would not be able to exist without the use of volunteers. Volunteers truly form the bedrock of our communities. People often do not realize the huge amount of work volunteers do in our towns and cities.

The Volunteer Service Awards are an important way for us to recognize this hard work and acknowledge our volunteers for all they do. I'm reminded of people like Mary Phelan from Caledon. Mary has been a volunteer with the Canadian Cancer Society for over 40 years. I think of Lorna Bethell. Lorna has been a volunteer with churches and hospitals for most of her life. Her leadership in creating a palliative care home in Caledon is a big part of why Bethell House exists today.

It's people like Mary and Lorna who were the inspiration for my private member's bill, the Helping Volunteers Give Back Act, that I introduced earlier today. This bill will help people volunteer more across Ontario by making it easier for them to volunteer with multiple organizations by allowing the same criminal record check to be used when applying to multiple organizations.

The Volunteer Service Awards recognize our volunteers for their hard work, but we also as legislators can do more by making it easier to allow them to do what they love. Often, if someone volunteers for one organization, they are more than willing to do so for others. We should be helping them realize that goal. It's an important cause and one that I hope will be supported by all parties in this House.

On behalf of the residents of Caledon and the PC caucus, I would like to say congratulations to all the Volunteer Service Award recipients. We cannot thank you enough.

FINDING YOUR WAY PROGRAM

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join with my colleagues in offering the support of the PC caucus for the Finding Your Way wandering prevention program. The Alzheimer Society of Ontario is to be congratulated for launching this vital program, and I am glad the government has agreed to provide the necessary funding. Finding Your Way will be a great help in teaching families, caregivers and first responders how to keep those with dementia safe and what to do if someone goes missing.

Safety starts in the home, and I know it can be a challenge for many families, particularly where the caregivers have to work during the day. The safety kit that the Alzheimer Society has designed is one that every family member of someone with dementia should ask for and follow. Alzheimer's and other dementias are terrible diseases which rob people of their memories and ability to think and make daily tasks difficult and sometimes impossible.

Nearly 200,000 Ontarians over 65 are affected, and the number, sadly, is increasing. Despite this, much of the new research is providing hope for those with dementia and their families. The Alzheimer Society tells us that key drugs are now available that delay the onset and slow the progress of the disease. Research is telling us new ways that people can reduce risk factors, and the search for a vaccine is promising.

We should all give our thanks to the Alzheimer Society for its hard work in research and advocacy, creating programs such as Finding Your Way that will make a real difference in people's lives. I would also like to take the chance to thank my local Alzheimer societies in greater Simcoe county and York region for the important work they do.

Finding Your Way is a great program, and I urge every family member and caregiver of someone with dementia to find out more.

FINDING YOUR WAY PROGRAM

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am happy to speak to this important issue. We are pleased to hear about this program and welcome the announcement on behalf of seniors and Ontarians. Moreover, I am glad to see that the government of Ontario has partnered with the Alzheimer Society of Ontario as key stakeholders representing those suffering from dementia and those who care for them.

We know that nearly 200,000 Ontarians have dementia, and that this number will increase to more than 250,000 by the year 2020. We need action to be taken today. We can't afford to wait for another senior to be lost or go missing. With one in three people with dementia going missing at some point, the numbers of individuals and their families potentially affected are staggering.

I am also pleased to see that the kits include specific information about what to do in case someone does go missing. The kit also highlights the need to include working with local law enforcement and other available community resources. There are so many Ontarians caring for loved ones, and having access to the right information at the right time is essential.

We must keep in mind that, while this is a great first step, there is more work to be done. I congratulate the Alzheimer Society for their efforts, but remind this government that it is their job to protect the most vulnerable, whether they are living in care or living at home.

As the NDP seniors' critic, I hear from many families who are struggling to make sure their loved ones have the care and attention they deserve. We are currently debating the caregiver bill, and the New Democrats are very concerned about how little this bill does—how it does not address many of the most fundamental issues, including finances, kinds of illnesses covered and the creation of an integrated system of supports for caregivers.

New Democrats are very concerned about the ongoing delays in our home care system, that some seniors are

waiting up to 262 days for care, and this leaves families and individuals without help that they need. We are urging this government to address the problems in home care by putting our five-day home care guarantee into the budget.

Finally, we continue to be very concerned about the safety of our loved ones when they go into a long-term-care home. The government tells us that our long-term-care homes are safe for vulnerable seniors, yet terrible news stories of abuse and violence keep emerging. We need to end this once and for all.

We welcome this announcement today, but let's not forget how much more needs to be done.

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VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to salute all those volunteers out in our communities. They are the lifeblood of literally every town, city, village and rural area of this province. They give of themselves and they give of their talents, and they do so in a way without expecting ever to be rewarded, and certainly many of them without ever expecting to be recognized.

Last night, as an example, I had an opportunity to attend a small community group called Applegate, which is in the southwest quadrant of my riding. It was a really nice little ceremony, with eight or 10 people, who were given just a little piece of paper thanking them for everything they had done—people who had cooked meals, people who had done some fundraising, people who had been part and parcel of community events.

On Sunday afternoon I was at the Agnes Macphail Award ceremony in East York, where the Honourable Alan Redway was honoured. People might know him as an MP; they might know him as the former mayor. But he was honoured not for those things but what he has done since he left political office: the Daily Bread Food Bank; in the Leaside community; housing for people who are in desperate need of it; and at Flemingdon legal services, helping new immigrants and others to get legal services that they need.

On Saturday, I went to the Little Stanley Cup at Stan Wadlow arena. It's a very unique thing because there's only one true replica of the Stanley Cup in all of Canada. It's handed out in East York every year to the winning team. Toronto occasionally wins as well at the Little Stanley Cup. There were some wonderful people there: Art Kennedy, Ed Svelnes and a whole group of parents and others who struggle and work all year long in order to produce the hockey teams and give opportunities for kids to play one of our national sports.

These are just some of the five million people who are out there, and I'm very thankful that some of them are going to be recognized by the province. But it's equally important that they all understand that they have a feeling of accomplishment. Whether they're sports teams, community groups, or civic groups, whether they help the aged, those with disabilities, or the environment, or do a

thousand other things, we could not produce the kind of communities we want to live in without them.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Hon. John Milloy: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find unanimous consent to move the late show requested by the member from Timmins–James Bay directed to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines which was scheduled for tonight to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 27, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we have unanimous consent to move the late show? Agreed.

Not to set a trend, but it's now time for petitions, so I'll acknowledge the member from Durham.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to stand behind my House leader here, representing the people of Durham riding. It says:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the" Minister of the Environment, Mr. Bradley, "has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and" more "prone to error; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assess tailpipe emissions, but instead scans the on-board diagnostics systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems" which the new emissions testing method has caused; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false" fails, "which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly" of Ontario as follows:

That the Ministry of the Environment take the advice of our critic, Michael Harris, and "take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Andrew, a page from my riding of Durham.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the NDP member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton has put forward a plan for auto insurance that would dramatically drive up rates for drivers throughout northern Ontario. According to one estimate, drivers in northwestern Ontario could expect to pay 38.8% more in insurance premiums if the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton's proposal is adopted;

"Whereas Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada has said, 'In essence, the bill would force responsible drivers to subsidize the insurance premiums of dangerous drivers';

"Whereas the leader of the third party and the other NDP members of the Legislature have made it clear that they continue to support the member's ... proposal for auto insurance reform;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To make it clear that the Legislature does not support the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton's proposal to change auto insurance in Ontario."

I support this petition. I will affix my signature to it and hand it to Jacob.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's great to see you in the chair once again.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until an independent third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects, we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines; and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government place a moratorium on the approval of any wind energy projects and a moratorium on the construction of industrial wind projects until further studies on the potential adverse health

effects of industrial wind turbines, their effect on the environment, the potential devaluation of residential property are completed; and that any industrial wind projects not currently connected to the grid be cancelled.”

I agree with this petition and I'll affix my name to it.

SPRINGWATER PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we oppose the termination of the operating budget for Springwater Provincial Park in Springwater township on March 31, 2013;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We ask that the park remain operating and facilities such as the animal sanctuary, cabins/shelters, playground equipment and ground maintenance remain intact and operating.”

I agree with this petition and will sign it.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I agree with my friend from Northumberland; you look great in the chair.

Today I present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario has closed historic jails in Walkerton and other rural Ontario municipalities resulting in loss of employment and heritage buildings to be vacated; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario is committed to job creation and economic development in rural Ontario communities and the preservation of heritage resources; and

“Whereas the provincial Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services has indicated a desire to establish a provincial correctional museum and memorial to showcase the history, heritage and legacy of our correctional institutions;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government support the establishment of the Province of Ontario Correctional Museum in the historic 1866 Bruce County jail in Walkerton and instruct the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, to begin discussions with the municipality of Brockton.”

I totally agree with this petition and I will give it to John to take to the table.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: On behalf of the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry and I, I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the member churches of the Seaway Valley Presbytery are subject to the provisions of the Health

Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08; and

“Whereas these churches and other non-profit organizations in eastern Ontario's rural communities cannot afford to pay for the expensive testing required by this regulation or the volunteers to transport water samples to provincially accredited laboratories in urban centres hours away; and

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“Whereas public health laboratories have the equipment necessary to conduct the testing required under Ontario regulation 319/08;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of Health amends Ontario regulation 319/08 to allow non-profit organizations to have water testing done at existing public health laboratories at no cost.”

I'll affix my signature to the petition and send it to the table.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: I have another petition to the Minister of the Environment, which reads as follows:

“Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

“Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

“Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

“Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year”—especially when it's not raining;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced” rigorously “by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks.”

I would put to the minister that he should cancel the Drive Clean program totally, right now.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and the quality of life for all future generations;

"Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which will have significant human and financial costs for;

"Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

"Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in the headwaters of multiple highly vulnerable aquifers is detrimental;

"Whereas the county of Oxford has passed a resolution requesting a moratorium on landfill construction or approval;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To implement a moratorium in Oxford county on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

"That this review of alternatives would give special emphasis on (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can efficiently and practically be recycled or reused so as not to require disposal in landfills."

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to read this petition, and I affix my signature.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Betty Schneider of Clearview township for sending me these petitions.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the residents of Clearview township and neighbouring townships, oppose the wpd Canada Fairview wind project on Fairgrounds Road and all wind energy projects in Clearview township; and

"Whereas we support the petition of mayors and councillors from 80 municipalities, farm organizations, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, which petition requested that the province place an immediate moratorium on all wind projects until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health, amongst other things; and

"Whereas wpd Canada's Fairview wind project violates the OLS airspace and usability of registered aerodromes in Clearview, including Collingwood Regional Airport and Stayner field, and wpd Canada's draft renewal energy approvals reports do not recognize these impacts or the jurisdiction of the government of Canada; and

"Whereas wpd Canada is seeking final approval from the province for the Fairview wind project prior to

completion of the federal Health Canada study and prior to federal actions to protect aviation safety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario agree and accept that until the federal health study is completed and federal aeronautical zoning is in place, that it will immediately take whatever action is necessary to give full effect to a moratorium on all wind turbine development in Ontario, including all projects for which final approvals have not been given."

I agree with this and I will sign it. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLY ACT, 2013

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2013

Mr. Milloy, on behalf of Mr. Sousa, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013 / Projet de loi 33, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2013.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased to be here today to talk very briefly about the Supply Act for the 2012-13 fiscal year. Rather than dwell on the many issues that I know members will want to talk about today in a very broad debate that usually takes place in terms of the Supply Act, I thought I'd just give a little bit of background, particularly for viewers, as to what the Supply Act is. It's one of the cornerstones in this Legislature. Passing the Supply Act will constitute the final authorization by this Legislature of the government's program spending for the fiscal year that is coming to a close.

If passed, this bill would give the government the authority to finance its programs and honour its commitments. Up to this point, the government's interim spending authority for the fiscal year which will end March 31, 2013, has been provided through the Interim Appropriation for 2012-2013 Act. Pending the vote, the enactment of the Supply Act would repeal and replace this temporary legislation.

It's important to note that the Supply Act would not authorize any new expenditures. All expenditures incurred under the Supply Act would be in accordance with the 2012-13 estimates that have been tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Because the Supply Act is intended to be the statutory authority for all incurred expenditures during the relevant fiscal year, it would be deemed to have come into force on the first day of the present fiscal year, which is April 1, 2012.

The Supply Act would provide necessary legal spending authority for important payments made to institutions and individuals. These include nursing homes, hospitals,

doctors, schools, municipalities, financial and income support recipients, people with disabilities and special needs, children's aid societies and those who rely on various benefits or programs, such as the Ontario Child Benefit.

I think that with that brief description members realize the importance of this piece of legislation. Of course, I look forward to what I imagine will be a very vigorous debate this afternoon, but ultimately I urge all members to support this very important act that is coming forward today. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. It's an honour to rise on behalf of the residents of Dufferin—Caledon to comment on the government bill before the House this afternoon.

The bill before us today, the Supply Act, 2013, is basically a bill which allows the Minister of Finance to spend taxpayers' money to pay the salaries of public sector employees as well as make other necessary payments. This is related to the interim supply motion that was debated last week, which I also spoke to.

As I said then, and will say now, Ontario is in the midst of the biggest jobs and spending crisis of our lifetime. Compounding this dire situation is the fact that the party across the aisle that created the mess just doesn't understand that their tired, old, recycled policies are not the solution; they are in fact the problem.

In my remarks last week I decided to use my time to focus on the reckless overspending demonstrated by this government. I outlined how, contrary to their soaring platitudes and feel-good bill names, the Liberal government has run Ontario totally off course and the result has been crippling debt and deficits.

I recalled how over a year ago we were all presented with a stark, foreboding picture of our province's finances by the economist Don Drummond. He warned us that unless we took immediate action and stopped moving down this reckless path, we would soon be confronted with the untenable spectre of a deficit of over \$30 billion and a debt exceeding \$400 billion, yet even those astonishing figures were not enough to dissuade the Liberal government from entrenching their big-spending ways.

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So here we stand today, awaiting another budget, confronted with another \$100-billion-plus deficit—more borrowed money, courtesy of Ontario's future generations; more reckless spending on the part of the Liberal government. That is why I was unsurprised—dismayed, yes; worried, yes. But surprised? Sadly, no. When Premier Wynne and her finance minister began referencing the need for new transit revenue tools while at the same time refusing to rule out new taxes as a component of their upcoming budget, I got worried. Frankly, the reason I wasn't surprised is because Premier Wynne and her Liberal colleagues are turning to what they know best,

just like they did under her predecessor, Dalton McGuinty: new taxes.

I want to get something out of the way and on the record here and now so that there's no confusion or room for error: A tax is a tax. Any time the government takes money out of a person's pocket or a business profit, it is taxing the private sector of our economy. All that taxing takes its toll on the economy, and as a result, private sector job creation stagnates and suffers.

You see, Speaker, what the Liberal government just does not seem to realize is that it already takes a huge amount of money out of the private sector economy each and every year. Just because this government can't effectively manage the money they already have—just because they waste huge amounts of that money—does not mean that this government should now take more of the people's money to waste and mismanage.

If we were in the real world—you know, where everyone else lives—it would be akin to using your credit card and spending every last cent you made every month to cover your living costs; then, once you've maxed out your credit card, you just get another credit card and continue doing the same thing over and over and over. I don't think there's a single one amongst us who would teach our children to manage their finances that way, never mind condone their government doing so. That's the problem we face here today, because that's exactly what this government has been doing and continues to do.

The worst part is that they've done it for so long now that it has become structural. To demonstrate my point, consider the fact that while our annual deficit is approximately \$11.9 billion, we pay approximately \$10 billion annually in interest, servicing the massive debt that the Liberal government has run up. That makes debt interest payments the third-biggest expenditure of this government, behind only the health care and education ministries. There is no way to stop paying those interest payments—except, of course, to pay down your debt, which, of course, we cannot do because we are consistently running deficits.

Every year, we increase our debt more and more, and every year, this in turn further restricts our ability to balance the budget more and more. So the cycle continues, until we reach a point—and I daresay we may just have arrived at that juncture already in Ontario—where the deficits are just too toxic and the deficit too massive—that the Liberal government finally throws its hands up and explains to Ontario, "There's no other way. We're really sorry, but we have no choice but to raise your taxes again."

We are almost there; slowly but surely, the Premier and her finance minister have been talking about more revenue and more taxes. Surely anyone can see the writing on the wall. The party opposite will resort to the only thing they know how to do: tax more and spend more. This is a fiscal policy I wholeheartedly reject, and that is why I will not be supporting this bill before us here today: because I believe that it is within our capacity

to actually reduce reckless overspending. Moreover, I believe that we owe it to Ontarians to do so.

With our caucus not supporting this bill, I'm sure the other parties will cry foul. I'm sure they'll revert to their usual canned lines and claim, "The PCs are never for anything; they're always against everything." Well, I, for one, refute that claim. I think we're for ensuring Ontario's services are well funded and operating effectively, but I think we're against running large deficits year over year, consistently avoiding making the tough decisions that are necessary to balance the budget. I think we are for having cost-effective, sustainable green energy, like hydroelectric power, the essential part of our province's power supply, but I think we're against imposing a draconian Green Energy Act on Ontarians with little regard for municipal planning rights, public health concerns or consumer affordability. I think we're for paying our public sector employees a fair, honest wage. What we're against is doling out anything union bosses demand with little or no consideration paid to Ontario's fiscal realities. And I can tell you that we in the PC caucus are absolutely for a change in direction and a change of leadership in Ontario. What we are against is standing by idly while the Liberal government continues to run up the tab and make our province more and more financially unsustainable.

This government's reckless financial record, out-of-control spending and a complete lack of action in creating private sector job growth makes it undeniable that the party opposite cannot be supported, and that is why I will be voting against this supply motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think, though, we are dealing with the Supply Act today, not the supply motion.

For anybody who might be watching this on television, this is not a rerun. This is sort of what happens here. We talk about the supply motion one day, we pass it, and then the next day we turn around and talk about the Supply Act. Although they're very similar, they are somewhat different.

Every year, we go through this process. Every year that I've been here for the last 12 years, and I think every year probably since Confederation, we go through the same kind of discussion leading up to a budget.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, I haven't been here that long, although some days it feels like that. But no, I've been here for 12 years, and for 12 years I've watched the same thing. I've watched when the Conservatives were on that side, standing up and asking for a supply motion and for a Supply Act to follow that. And it's essential for that to happen as we lead up to the budget, because the government does not have the authority to spend money without such a motion and act being put forward until the time that the budget is passed.

Traditionally and historically, this has been an act that will last for four to six months and, at the end of that,

hopefully by that time the budget is passed and all is well with the world. And if the budget's not passed, then we'll be in an election.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: All will not be well with the world if that budget is passed, Michael.

Mr. Michael Prue: Then we'll be in an election, and my friends in the Conservative Party can be very happy, I'm sure, at last.

This allows for payments, because governments have to continue to make payments. Whether or not the budget itself has been passed, they have to make payments to the municipalities who expect and need that money in order that the cities, towns and villages of this province can operate. They need to make money available to the universities and the schools so that our children and adults can continue to learn, and they need to make money available to our hospitals so that our sick can be looked after. They need to have the money to pay the thousands of public employees who work diligently and well on behalf of the people of this province and for the thousand other things that government does.

If this act did not pass, then the payments would literally stop. I don't know why my friends in the official opposition are bound and determined to make this happen. It seems to me that if they are dissatisfied with the direction of government policy, the true test will come in the budget, when we actually know what this government is going to do.

Now, all of us have a pretty good guess. We all have a pretty good guess what's going to happen, and I think there's going to be a lot of disappointment in this province because right off the bat—as a member of the finance committee, I study this a great deal, what the government is up to and what they're planning to do. But this government is even keeping the date of the budget itself in secret. The finance committee has been asking the finance minister for weeks to announce the budget day because the finance committee has to do a number of things. We have to travel across and around the province in order to gauge public opinion on the upcoming budget.

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We have already talked to about 100 people. We wish we could have talked to more, but we can't schedule dates that may be in conflict with the eventual date of the budget. And as I've said, we've heard from about 100 people, and we're going to be in Thunder Bay next week to hear from up to 28 more. We've got to prepare reports. We have to have motions made, reports made, translations made, and the whole package sent off to the finance minister well before the budget date. But we don't know when that date is, so we're having to truncate everything we do down to a few weeks in order to meet an imaginary time frame. It has been very frustrating, I must tell you.

What we've heard from people across this province is a whole bunch of things. Many groups have come forward in support of the report made by Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh about people on welfare and the reform of our welfare system here in Ontario. Many

people have come forward talking about tax fairness and how we need to put some kind of fairness back into our taxation policies here in Ontario. Some have come and asked us to balance the budget.

Some have come and asked us to change legislation that will make their work an easier work and also recognize the kinds of difficulties they have in performing their duty on behalf of the people of Ontario. I speak specifically here about the firefighters, who have asked us to change the presumptive legislation in order to add some additional cancers to the list of things to which they might be susceptible due to the nature of their work.

We've talked to doctors and nurses and hospitals about how to make the health system more efficient, and some very surprising recommendations have come from some of them. The Ontario Nurses' Association asked us to get rid of CCACs. That was quite a surprise to me when I heard that. We've had others talk about how the hospitals, in fact, are spending too much money in some of the fields rather than listening to the experts, i.e., the doctors, around a whole range of programs.

We've listened to business organizations trying to balance the budget again. We've listened to unions and some of the right-wing think tanks who are diametrically opposed in their views, but both had views to offer.

We've listened, of course, to ordinary citizens who come with their complaints.

I am eternally optimistic—unlike some of my friends in this House—that this government will listen. I am eternally optimistic that they will do a U-turn and change what they've been doing for the last eight years: that they'll finally understand that deficits need to be controlled; that they'll finally understand that they need to find better and more acceptable ways of dealing with the many problems that Ontarians face; and that they will finally understand that some of these programs are essential to the well-being of the people of this province.

They hired an expert by the name of Mr. Drummond, who told them a whole bunch of things that they needed to do, and I am eternally hopeful that maybe they'll listen to some of those. Mr. Drummond said that we had to start exploring certain fields where we weren't really getting the kind of support or the kinds of money that Ontarians would come to expect. He thought we had to explore the increase in the employer health tax exemptions. We had to look at whether we were getting good value for our money or whether those exemptions were necessary for all of the very large corporations. Granted, we in the NDP think they're absolutely essential to small business, but are they essential to very large business and should they see that exemption on their payroll when they have hundreds or thousands of employees?

We have to start looking, I believe, at the tax write-offs, and there are many of them. I'm very disappointed with the answers we're getting in this House about the entertainment tax writeoff that this government talked about in 2009 when they brought in their very unpopular HST legislation. One of the things they said was that there wasn't going to be an exemption at that time—they

said there's not going to be an exemption on the entertainment and meals tax writeoff until 2015.

Here we are, coming into a budget that's going to lead us up to that, and we in the New Democratic Party are saying, "Hold on here a minute. This is a \$1.3-billion expense to the government unless you continue it." We've asked day in, day out to this government, "What are you going to do about that? What are you going to do about that \$1.3-billion potential cost to the government by allowing people to no longer pay the HST on entertainment and meals?" We haven't gotten any real answers.

I want to tell you that ordinary people who've come before the finance committee don't like this one bit. If they've ever had enough money to attend even a hockey game and look up into all those big, fancy seats and all those people having a great time in the box, they have to wonder—they have to wonder—who's paying for this? In fact, the people of Ontario are paying for this through tax exemptions. You have to wonder, when you can't even afford a ticket to get in there in the first place, how is it and why is it that this is a tax writeoff? Couldn't we use the \$1.3 billion in a much better way? I would suggest we can.

We've been hearing the last few days, in this Legislature, and the banter back and forth across—the Liberals are all gung-ho to try to raise some money for transit. New Democrats love transit. We think it's an important thing. But the question is, where is the money going to come from? Where is it going to come from? Well, there's a real easy place for \$1.3 billion. There's a real easy place for some of it, and Liberals across there are going to have to think about some of that.

We have to start talking about tax compliance. In here—in the province of Ontario—and across Canada, we have many corporations that have offices in Toronto, but they also have offices in Montreal and in Halifax and Vancouver and Calgary. In Canada, it is perfectly legal for companies to shift their profits and losses across their various branch plants in each of the provinces and thereby evade the taxes in this province, and sometimes the taxes in other provinces as well. We need to sit down with the other provinces. We need to sit down with the federal government and work on that tax compliance, because if we do, there can be an additional \$200 million to the revenues of this province.

We also need to ask the federal government to deal internationally, because the same phenomenon occurs, not only with inside the borders of Canada, but also outside the borders of Canada, when multinational corporations take their profits and their losses from other jurisdictions and use that against the profits that are being made here in the province of Ontario.

New Democrats need to know that this budget is going to do so much more for the people of Ontario. We are waiting for budget day. My friends are asking, "Are you going to prop this government up?" I don't know, because I don't know what they're going to say and I don't know what they're going to do. If their only

solution is to tax the people more who can ill afford it, I don't think there's much hope that the budget will make it off this floor. If they are actually going to listen to the people of Ontario and provide the kind of leadership that I hope they can, then there may be hope yet.

As I said, I'm an eternal optimist. I believe all the time that when you start to listen to the people of Ontario instead of to yourself, you can make good decisions. So I'm asking them to please, please consider things that are important.

We have 600,000 people unemployed in this province who desperately want to get a job. Most problematic, in my mind, is that we have a 15% or 16% rate of unemployment of those who are under the age of 26. They are desperately seeking to try to find that first and that important job, and they have not had the kind of success that we know they need to have. New Democrats are asking for a job plan for young people. We're asking for support to create jobs for them. We have earmarked how that can be done for some 25,000 young people: by giving guarantees to industry to create jobs.

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Right now, we give out lots of money. The Conservatives like to call it corporate welfare. I would like to call it corporate largesse, because we give out the money with no strings attached whatsoever. What we are saying as New Democrats is that strings have to be attached. One of the ways to attach those strings is to create jobs for young people, to allow the corporations an amount of money—\$8,000 or \$9,000, I think the figure is—in order to create a job that lasts for a minimum of six months, that pays a decent salary and that has a future in it at the end. It's not just six months and kick them out on to the street; it's intended for six months in order to assist the company to evaluate the capability of the incumbent and then to continue that employment into the long term, once they're satisfied the person can do the job.

This is the kind of thing we need in this province. We cannot have a whole generation of young people who have no future and no prospects. We can't have a whole generation of young people who leave university and community colleges and find no work. We can't have a whole generation of young people who are forced to stay in their family home because they have no other options and no other way of making ends meet. We need to give them the same kind of opportunities that all of us in this room probably had when we were in Ontario, when we were in our twenties, when we were looking for our first job and were able to find it and prosper. That's what we need to do, and that's what New Democrats expect in this upcoming budget.

We also expect, Madam Speaker, that this government will finally look at the whole problem of home care and people who are exiting the hospitals and people who require assistance to go back to their homes. At the present time, it just takes too long. We know in some parts of Ontario, it takes 262 days from the time you apply for home care until the time that somebody actually comes to help you in your house. That is not acceptable

to the New Democratic Party, and it's certainly not acceptable to the people of this province.

We have suggested that, for a relatively small amount of money, we can make that, and we must make that, available to people after five days. It's doable. In a city like Toronto, it's already around 10 days, so it's not like reinventing the wheel. But in rural and northern Ontario, where it is particularly acute—small-town places—people wait huge amounts of time. This is not fair to them nor their families nor to all of us. It in turn, in many cases, costs us more money because they return to hospital or they go into facilities that cost a lot more than the small amount that would be necessary to keep them in their own homes.

We as New Democrats believe that consumers need a break, too. I'm going to turn my attention next to insurance rates. The highest insurance rates of any drivers in Canada are paid here in Ontario. Two years ago—I listened again to the government, who are saying they are going to help the insurance companies by slashing all the programs. I said then, and I'll say it again now, anybody can sell an inferior product for less money. That's the reality of what has happened. The insurance companies are selling a product which is inferior to what they sold two years ago. But they're not selling it for less money; they're selling it for the same or more money. This is where I think this government has been duped.

Consumers expect that if they're not getting the same quality product—and if they're willing to settle for something that doesn't give them the same guarantees if they're hurt or injured or in an accident—they shouldn't be paying as if they were.

The insurance companies have seen a windfall of some \$2 billion a year or some \$4 billion in the two years since the law was changed. Yet, what have consumers seen? They saw last year a 5% increase, and they see this year, as the minister said, a fraction, a fraction, a fraction of 1% decrease. But I beg to differ, because certainly that's not universal, and it's certainly not what consumers were expecting.

New Democrats are demanding a 15% reduction in automobile insurance rates because the consumers deserve it, because the consumers are sick and tired of being ripped off. It is a commodity they must purchase if they're going to drive a car. They have no option. You can shop around all you want from the various insurance companies, but in the end you're still going to be paying more than you would anywhere else in this country. So we're expecting some movement on this as well.

We also have the recommendations of Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh about ODSP and Ontario Works and making it more humane. One of the things they are suggesting is that people on ODSP and Ontario Works get to keep the first \$200 of income they make each and every month in order to make life easier for them and to help them transition back into work life, if they are capable of doing so. We think it's a very reasonable recommendation that won't cost too much money and is certainly long overdue. A person on ODSP who earns

\$200 a month is not going to be rich. In fact, that \$200 goes only part way between their life and the poverty line.

I will tell you—and I've said this story many times in here, and I'd like to say it again, with permission, if I can have a few more minutes from my colleague—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay—because he has the other 20 minutes.

In this province many years ago, when I was a boy, people who were born with Down syndrome went inevitably to an institution when they were five or six years old. They just disappeared from your community and you never saw them again. We have, as a society, taken a great deal of pain around this, but ultimately to good, good effect. People with Down syndrome now live in their homes and their communities. They finish high school, and they go out and work. I go into the supermarket and I see them stocking shelves. I go into McDonald's and I see them working behind the counter. I see them sweeping floors. I see them doing lots of stuff. But this government claws back the money they make. They are eligible and entitled to ODSP, but the government claws back half of everything they earn, and I think it's a shame. As a matter of fact, I think it's more than a shame. I think it almost borders on criminality, because I do not want their money clawed away from them because in their whole life they will never know anything but poverty unless we let them keep some of it.

That's why I appreciate, although I think it's too small, the recommendations that have been made to allow them to keep the first \$200 of money they earn each and every month, because with that combination and what they get on ODSP, they climb the ladder ever so slowly towards that figure where they're no longer in poverty, and they're in poverty through absolutely no fault of their own.

Last but not least, New Democrats are looking for something to reward job creators. We're looking for something to make sure that those people, those industries that are out there who are trying to create jobs, are rewarded for creating the jobs, not for taking the money and hoarding it. Even the finance minister of Canada says that we're sitting on about \$1 trillion of hoarding of monies from some of the large corporations. We want them to open those purse strings and to spend the money and to create jobs and to be rewarded for it, because in the end, when we're all working, when we're all able to contribute to this wonderful province, it will be a better place.

To close, Madam Speaker, New Democrats are expecting a great deal, whether it's in two weeks or three weeks or four weeks when this budget comes down. We are expecting a U-turn from this government. We are expecting a budget that is more balanced. We are expecting a budget where people pay their fair share. We're expecting a budget where those in need are going to find that their needs are met and where the institutions we hold dear are supported in every possible way. If it

happens, you may find some votes on this side of the House; if it doesn't, we'll see you on the campaign trail.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to be here today to talk about the Supply Act for the 2012-13 fiscal year. The Supply Act is one of those cornerstone acts in this Legislature, as we all know. Passage of the Supply Act would constitute the final authorization by the Legislature of the government's program spending for the fiscal year that is coming to a close very shortly.

If passed, this bill would give the government the authority to finance its programs and honour its commitments for the current year. Up to this point, the government's interim spending authority for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013, has been provided through the Interim Appropriation for 2012-2013 Act. Pending the vote, the enactment of this Supply Act would repeal and replace that temporary legislation that we've been operating under.

Madam Speaker, it is important to note that the Supply Act would not authorize any new expenditures. All expenditures incurred under the Supply Act would be in accordance with the 2012-13 estimates that have been tabled in this Legislative Assembly.

Because the Supply Act is intended to be the statutory authority for all incurred expenditures during the relevant fiscal year, it would be deemed to have come into force on the first day of the fiscal year; that is, April 1, 2012. The Supply Act would provide the necessary legal spending authority for important payments made to all our institutions and individuals, including nursing homes, hospitals, doctors, schools, municipalities, financial and income support recipients, people with disabilities and special needs, children's aid societies and those who rely on the various benefits programs such as the Ontario Child Benefit.

I urge all members of the Legislature to support this act, because without this necessary spending authority, the government will be unable to meet its obligations to the people of this province.

I just want to speak a little bit about some of the accomplishments of this government during the past year. The government has done a great job of managing many of its expenditures. As reported on January 22, 2012, in Ontario's third-quarter finances, the province's 2012-13 deficit is projected to be \$11.9 billion. That's an improvement from the \$14.8 billion that was projected in the 2012 Ontario budget. This is the fourth year in a row that Ontario is ahead of the government's fiscal targets.

We've come a long way since the depths of the global recession in 2009. At that time, our deficit was projected to be \$24.7 billion; now we're projecting a deficit that is 52% lower. Our government is vigilant in staying on track to eliminate the deficit, as was planned, by 2017-18, and we have agreement on that particular year by all the parties in this House.

Madam Speaker, the past fiscal year involved some very difficult choices. As members know, a one-time

savings of \$1.1 billion was achieved with the elimination of banked sick days for teachers. The 2012 budget included nearly \$18 billion in savings and cost avoidance over three years. We knew we had to look at managing compensation costs in order to meet our fiscal targets. We knew we had to protect the gains we made in health care and education. That's why this government has focused on taking a responsible approach to balancing our books.

Over the past number of years, this government has worked hard to help Ontario's businesses become more competitive. We have lowered taxes, we have cut red tape, we have invested in infrastructure in Ontario, and we as a government are very proud of these accomplishments.

I'd also like to take a moment to highlight the successes we have achieved since our new Ontario government has hit the road running. The government is moving ahead with a plan that will create jobs, strengthen the economy, and build stronger communities and a fair society for the people of this province. Just last month, employment in Ontario rose by 35,300 jobs. That increase accounted for 70% of all new jobs in the entire country. This province has gained 455,000 net jobs since the recessionary low in June 2009.

This government is committed to helping create jobs for the people of this province. That's why we have held jobs round tables across Ontario, led by our new Premier, Kathleen Wynne, with individuals from the private sector as well as our partners in labour, education and training. Discussion at these sessions has focused on generating ideas to grow employment opportunities for all of Ontario's communities.

This government is also committed to finding common ground among all parts of this province. We're committed to serving both the urban and rural communities, as well as people living in the north. I am proud to say that at the beginning of this month we had the pleasure of hosting the first northern cabinet meeting since 1995, because we understand that we are all connected and that every person in this province should have a chance to contribute and flourish.

This government will also continue to support advances in health care. That's why we recently announced \$100 million over five years to support world-leading brain research. This investment in innovation will not only strengthen our health care system, it will also help to strengthen our economy, because we understand that innovation and productivity are important parts of a thriving economy.

This government has been working hard on many different fronts for the people of this province. Here are just a few examples: We have provided grants for community groups to restore wetlands and clean up beaches and shorelines. We've introduced legislation that would, if passed, create three new categories of job protection leave so people can take care of their loved ones without fear of losing their job. We have also worked collaboratively with this Legislature to help prevent skin cancer

among young people by banning their use of tanning beds.

Our work is never finished. This year, we reached out to even more people across Ontario through our expanded pre-budget consultations. We believe it is important to open the channels for dialogue as we work to meet our fiscal targets in the upcoming year and beyond. We want to hear ideas from people, organizations, associations and other stakeholders across the province. We want ideas to help find common ground and continue our path of fiscal responsibility to balance the books by 2017-18. We're moving ahead with our plan to strengthen our economy, build a fair society and establish stronger communities for the people of this great province.

The Supply Act is one of the cornerstone acts in this Legislature. Passage of the Supply Act would constitute the final authorization by the Legislature of the government's program spending for the fiscal year that is coming to a close. Again, I urge all members of the Legislature to support the Supply Act, because without this necessary spending authority, the people of this province would be denied the opportunities they deserve. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Steve Clark: I just want to say, before I start, that I'm wearing a purple tie today for epilepsy awareness. I wanted that into the record.

It's very interesting when we're having debate this afternoon. It likens me to want to put on the record my opinion about the future of Ontario's fiscal health. I have to tell you, in my opinion, I don't think the patient is doing very well. I think the prognosis isn't good in the province of Ontario right now. Nearly a decade under the McGuinty-Wynne government, the patient is struggling.

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I think the strong, robust economy that this government inherited back in 2003 is looking rather weak and anemic in 2013. We're no longer the envy of all the other provinces in Canada. Ontario is now a have-not province, and we have to look for the kindness of others to help make ends meet. Even with that charity from other provinces—those provinces, I might add, that do have their economic fundamentals right—the Liberal government in this province still can't manage to make ends meet. We're saddled with a staggering \$12-billion deficit and a provincial debt that's spiraling out of control, which now stands at \$235 billion, an unbelievable 78% increase over the past nine years.

I could stand here for a lot longer than the minutes that I am going to be here to recite statistic after statistic on how bad things have become. I'm just going to give you one statistic, one number that I want everyone watching to remember, and that number is 600,000. That's the number of Ontarians that woke up this morning without a job. We also know there are countless others in communities across Ontario struggling desperately to hold on to things as the rising cost of doing business in Ontario,

the rising cost of living in Ontario, is increasing rapidly. The example we use on this side of the House is the cost of energy. Many of those 600,000 people saw their good jobs in Ontario, through our manufacturing sector, disappear. Now they're trying to support their families with part-time or minimum wage jobs.

It wasn't always like that. I remember a couple of speakers ago, my friend Mr. Prue talked about when he was in his twenties. I remember that when I was in my twenties, this province was the envy of Canada. I remember graduating from university, and I got involved in municipal politics. I was the mayor of a city in my riding—Brockville. I can remember how proud I was as a municipal leader in this province, how I worked with the members of my council and the communities within both that city and with other communities in eastern Ontario to help bring new jobs to our community and new prosperity.

The reality in communities today has certainly changed. When you talk to municipal leaders, you don't necessarily have that level of optimism that you had so many decades ago.

I know in my speech—and I know my friend the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington is here. He and I both spoke last week about our families, some of our kids that have left the province of Ontario, have left this province for jobs in other provinces, and how sad, how angry that makes us feel that those young people who have left this province, who will build their families, buy their houses, create that prosperity, have chosen another province. I think we need to change that. We need to make a change, get our economic fundamentals right and provide some hope and optimism for those young people for the future of this province.

I listen to the motion and I hear some members talk about this motion as being routine. When you talk about this Liberal government and mention the word “spending,” nothing is routine when it comes to the Liberal government and spending taxpayers' money. The single most important thing we can do as a government is to manage the economy.

A government must ensure the decisions it makes don't impoverish future generations with unmanageable debt levels that threaten our most valued services, things like health and education. That's what's happened in Ontario. Bad decision after bad decision, mismanagement after mismanagement and scandal after scandal have dug us in a hole that has put the quality of life for our children and grandchildren in jeopardy.

I want to say, I think we need to reverse the course that we're on, or the terrible news that we see in the media from countries like Greece and Cyprus. I am so worried that those are going to be the headlines in the province of Ontario some day in the future.

Hard-working Ontarians, their children and their grandchildren deserve better than what they're getting from the McGuinty-Wynne government. We need to stand up, and I think we need to, as an opposition, treat that role that we play with a lot of respect, and I take

offence at some members' assertions that this is a routine motion. We have to demand accountability from our government and demand those answers to the very serious questions that members on this side of the House are asking. That's why the people in our ridings elected us: to stand up and not to give the government a free pass like has been done.

The old saying goes, “That was then; this is now.” I think that's very important, because we're at a crossroads. Again, we need to take some bold action to get our economic fundamentals right, and I think we in the Ontario PC Party are doing that. It's all about showing leadership in the province of Ontario.

I have to tell you, Speaker, that when I looked at the throne speech—and I made some comments last week about the throne speech that was given here back on February 19. None of the bills that the government has put forward right now look at—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: I know that one of the members opposite just started talking and naming some of those bills. The bills that he mentioned don't do anything to reduce our debt and our deficit. They don't do anything to encourage private sector investment, and they don't do anything to help those 600,000 men and women who woke up this morning without a job. In fact, in that speech, I quoted last week that the government referred to fiscal responsibility, economic growth and increased employment being the bedrocks on which the McGuinty-Wynne government is going to build their plan. Well, I'll tell you, I didn't hear any bedrock in that speech at all; in fact, I think it's quicksand that they were talking about, more importantly. Quite frankly, I think we're up to our necks in quicksand from this government, and we need to change.

The other thing I want to talk about is the shocking position that I see with members of the third party on this motion, and I know they must be hearing the same when they're in their ridings. Their constituents must be telling them that we need to change our approach in this province, yet it appears that the NDP are once again going to give the government a free pass, and that's sad to hear. They're going to give them more time to continue implementing the kinds of policies that have put Ontario in the mess that it's in. We saw it last year with the budget. NDP members went out and they talked about how terrible it was with the government planning to kill 60,000 rural Ontario jobs with its attack on the horse racing industry, but when it came time for them to stand in their places and stand up for those 60,000 jobs, the NDP sat on their hands and allowed this budget to pass. That's why we're seeing the job losses and the loss of investment in rural ridings.

So I ask them, what are you prepared to do this year? Are you prepared to sit on your hands or are you prepared to stand up for those issues in the government? We've got the billion-dollar gas plant scandal, the debacle at Ornge and the continuing embarrassment at eHealth. The member for Kitchener—Conestoga talked

about the PhD that Ornge funded for the CEO. It's terrible, the amount of mounting debt and deficit, the lack of a plan that this government has, its green energy policies. The member for Huron-Bruce tabled a great piece of legislation that I hope other parties will support. These things and many more were given a pass by the NDP, the third party, while it has been our party that has stood up repeatedly and brought bold ideas to the table. Our party is the party that has the plan. There's no plan over there. There are a lot of words. There's a lot of meaningful conversation, I think the talking point was. "We like to have conversations." Well, do you know what? Ontarians are asking for action. They're asking to turn around the terrible economic policies that this government put forward.

I am going to join with members of my party and vote against this bill, and I'm very glad to have the opportunity to speak this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

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Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the residents of my great riding of Timiskaming-Cochrane. Before I start talking about the interim Supply Act—I had the opportunity this morning to travel to a part of the province I hadn't been to before. It was in Lucan. I had the opportunity to be on a nice farm in Lucan.

I've been a farmer all my life, and there's always one day when spring awakens and you can smell it and you can feel it. In my part of the province, it's not going to be for a while, because we've still got two and a half feet of snow. But today in Lucan, or outside of Lucan on that farm—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Home of the Black Donnellys.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: In my riding.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, and it's a great riding.

That smell and that feeling is what makes the difference between people in the country and people in big cities, because a lot of people living in big cities have never had that, where you feel the earth awakening. Sometimes in the country, us farmers are so busy that we miss that too. But today, in the Conservative member's riding, in Lucan—it deserves a mention—today was the first real day of spring there. You could smell it.

Mr. Randy Hillier: You don't want to be talking about the \$120 billion—

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm going to get to that.

What we're talking about today is the interim Supply Act, and yes, if we vote against this act, the government will fall. That is what the Conservatives want without even looking at the budget, without reading the budget. But if the government falls on an interim supply act, you will also get chaos, because the only people who will be able to regulate the money supply in this province will be the cabinet. So really, the Progressive Conservatives are saying, "You know what? We don't want the Legislature to control the money supply; we want the cabinet to control it."

Interjection: We don't want the coalition to control it. That's why.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, you want the cabinet to control it.

Hon. Liz Sandals: And we could do that.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, yes. The government has shown how well they can manage money. I think we can agree on this side of the House that we have some big problems with how the government manages money.

But this act is about—and it's not a routine act; we're talking about a lot of money. But there's a difference between making the government fall on the budget or making it fall on an interim supply act, where the day after the government falls you will have chaos, because it will be up to the cabinet to come up with some kind of plan—although the cabinet has more members than it had a while ago, so they can have more people to talk about it. But for the folks here and for the folks at home, there is a time to hold the government to account—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Support ONTC.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm going to get to the ONTC.

There is a time to hold the government to account—and it's coming quickly, and that is the budget—and there is a time to make sure that people get paid the next day, hospitals work the next day, and if there is a snowstorm, which could very well happen where I come from, that the plows go out the next day, and that's this—

Mr. Randy Hillier: The world will stop spinning if we don't pass this act.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, the world won't stop spinning, but we give cabinet control, and they've got enough problems. They can't handle the problems now.

One thing that the government—and I heard it again today, several times—the "new" Liberal government—

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's the new coalition government.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no. They keep talking about the "new" Liberal government. At the very best, it's new to you, because nothing has really changed; they've just brought it into the shop and done a bit of detailing, hoping that we'll buy it. That's exactly what has happened. A lot of the things they talk about as "new"—especially in my part of the province, one of the things they talk about as new is about the ONTC, our public transportation, our freight transportation.

When they announced they were going to divest it, that was a year ago, and not much has changed except they killed our passenger service, our passenger train. There's still time to actually put a pause and let northerners really make the tough decisions.

What they've done is they've created a committee but not really given it a mandate. They've said, "Well, we're going to create a committee. We're going to listen to northerners."

I support those people who join that committee, because you know what? Right now it's the only game in town. If I was a mayor in northern Ontario, I would be at that table.

Then they force them to sign non-disclosure agreements, so there's very few people now who can stand up and say, "Okay, wait a second. Let's give that committee a mandate to really see if divesting or if dumping the ONTC is really the answer for northern Ontario." If you really want to be—

Interjection: You supported it last year.

Mr. John Vanthof: Actually the truth is, in the committee we had amendments that were ruled in order. It was Tories who didn't support those amendments. Those amendments would have put a huge spoke in the wheels. Let's get it straight, who really—

Interjection: We voted against the budget, not you guys.

Mr. John Vanthof: You voted against the budget. But we were the ones who put the amendments in, and you didn't support them.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: I don't want to lose this debate into cheap political shots. Sometimes I wonder if the Progressive Conservative Party is really progressive conservative or more into progressive chaos by not supporting or by wanting to vote and confuse people. Vote against the budget if you will. You know what, the government—

Mr. Randy Hillier: I think you guys are the progressives—

Mr. John Vanthof: We're the progressives; you're the chaos.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Okay. The government is coming up to a huge test, and that's the budget. Our caucus will be supporting—

Interjection: The budget.

Mr. John Vanthof: Nope, the interim supply act, because we want people to get paid the next day.

But there are five bellwether signals that we're going to have to see in the new-to-you Liberal government. We've been really, really definite—not requests. We want these things so that you can show us that you're actually trying to do things differently. We've made the five requests or five signals that we want to see. Are they going to turn the province around by themselves? No.

Mr. Randy Hillier: What are the five? Tell me the five.

Mr. John Vanthof: I am going to get to some of the most important ones, okay?

In my riding, I have a lot of people—I think, as we all do—people on OW, people on ODSP. The vast majority of these people don't want a handout; they want a hand up. That's what the vast majority of them want. One thing that we've asked is that when these people go out and get a job, the first \$200 isn't clawed back by the government. There's no greater disincentive to working, even when you make just a little bit of money, than that it's taken away. That one would make a huge difference to people in Timiskaming-Cochrane and people all over.

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Everybody wants to improve their lot in life, and not everyone is dealt the same cards. With this, these people

could start getting a hand up, because they want to work, but there's no incentive to work or to declare your earnings if they're going to get stripped back anyway.

Another thing we think is very, very important is a first-jobs program. I'm one of the ridings where not everyone is employed, but there are a lot of jobs available in my riding. Northern Ontario, because of mining and forestry are coming back, but a lot of those—

Interjection: Solar farming.

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, mines and forestry and farming. We're not so much into solar farming.

The one thing that is very difficult is—and I've got kids going through it—to get your first job. Before I had the honour to stand in this place, I was an employer. When I had my own business, I was the same thing. If I had to pick between someone who had experience or qualifications—just qualifications or qualifications and experience, you know what? You'd pick someone with qualifications and experience. It's not rocket science.

What we're proposing is that when someone came for a first job and they have the qualifications, the government would help the employer and help the applicant with this program and, once again, give those people a hand up, not a handout. Both the employer and the employee need a hand up and not a handout.

There's something else that's very important in my riding. Since we don't have any public transportation except what was supposed to be the new and enhanced ONTC bus service, or private bus service, which also never materialized—when they cancelled the passenger train, in this House we were told that we were going to have an improved, enhanced bus service, but once again that never materialized. So in our riding and in many rural ridings—and a lot of urban ridings. I hear a lot of people talk about transit. A lot of people can't take transit. They have no option. To go to work, to go visit their families, they have no option but to drive.

In the past, this government has made changes to insurance. It was supposed to be that it would reduce the cost to the people who actually pay the premiums. Our coverages have changed; they've gone down. But the actual cost to the people has gone up. As we were looking for ways for government to save money, for government to provide better programs, we also identify, hey, there's a way that we can make a difference in the average working person's life who has to drive to work by forcing the government to provide a fair insurance rate, because, right now, we've got the highest insurance rates in the country—the highest insurance rates in the country. Is there any reason?

We have made a request. What we want is a bellwether signal that you on the government side are actually serious about lowering insurance rates to a reasonable level for the average working family who depend on a car.

Something else that we've talked quite a bit about is that the government should look at actually being serious about closing corporate tax loopholes, and should be serious about it, not just have conversations about it and

talk at length about it but be serious about it. We've made several suggestions or directives on how that can be done. And once again, we need to see them. We need to see them in the budget as a bellwether so that we could even consider supporting it. We in this corner of the House are not here to play games about, you know, we vote against everything and that's how we prove we stand up for the people. We're not here to play games. We don't say in the press, as do the Conservatives, how we are going to vote against something before we even read it. But I'd like to make a point that in this corner of the House, when we read the budget, if those bellwether signals aren't in there, then their time will come. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to be up and contributing to this debate. Why are we debating a supply bill in the first place? That's a good question, but the answer is really quite simple. We have a government that couldn't get its act together and actually put a budget before the end of the fiscal year, so that's why we're here debating this bill today.

The first chance that the new finance minister has had to try and change the trend of reckless overspending that's plagued this province and this government for the last nine years is before us, and he's late to the party. Once again, this government has overpromised and underperformed, and I can tell you that no one in this chamber or anywhere else in this province is very surprised at that fact. This bill is just simply a legislative symbol of this government. It's a status quo bill, a sign from the government that they really don't see a problem with the path that the province of Ontario is on right now. It operates under this false belief that spending can continue at the current rate and that that is affordable for not only the provincial but municipal governments in Ontario, too.

Last night, Belleville city council, which is in my riding of Prince Edward-Hastings, heard about the latest entrants on to the sunshine list. Get this: 53 of Belleville's 62 firefighters are on the sunshine list. So 85% of the Belleville fire department is making over \$100,000 now. For those of you who don't know, Belleville is a rather small municipality; less than 50,000 is the population. How can any reasonable finance minister sit in his place and say that it's acceptable that a city of less than 50,000, like Belleville, should pay 85% of its fire department more than \$100,000 a year? Perhaps the most outrageous part of this story is that the city of Belleville—get this—has been in arbitration with its firefighters' union since—wait for it—not last year, not 2010, but they've been in arbitration since 2008. To quote that old jazz song, something's gotta give. Last night, it was the outrage at Belleville city council, and I can assure you that it's probably the outrage on the Belleville Intelligencer comments section today as well.

How long is it going to be until we have a government that accepts the reality and the responsibilities beyond

this Queen's Park bubble? It's not the first example of how this government has failed to realize that the realities on the ground have changed, and we need a fundamentally different direction than we had under the nine years of Dalton McGuinty's failed premiership here in Ontario. I can tell you that before Dalton McGuinty tucked his tail between his legs and scooted out of the Legislature on October 15, 2012, closed the doors here at Queen's Park so that nothing could be debated, that very week, our very fine member from—where is Jim Wilson from?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Simcoe-Grey.

Mr. Todd Smith: Simcoe-Grey. He had a private member's bill before the House called the Ability to Pay Act, and it was going to address the problems with the arbitration system in Ontario. I'm very pleased to say that after the prorogation has ended now and we are back here in the Legislature, Mr. Wilson will again be introducing a bill called the Capacity to Pay Act. The aim is the same: It's to make sure that our municipalities have the ability to pay the payroll of our firefighters and our police officers and our public servants in the municipalities, because right now the arbitration system is broken.

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As Belleville struggles with the escalating costs of its fire department, and Bancroft struggles with the increasing costs of its police service, right along with Prince Edward county—they have same situation down there—we've got a government here with its fingers plugged firmly in its ears on this issue.

So I can't support a bill that says the status quo is acceptable, as this bill does, or at least this act does, here in this House today.

I can't support an act that stands in the place of a budget because the finance minister has failed to bring forward a budget before the end of the fiscal year. As finance minister, the member from Mississauga South now has the major task every year of bringing forward a budget commensurate with the end of the fiscal year. Not only are we standing here in the last week of the Legislature in March without a budget plan; we don't even have a date yet as to when the budget is going to be brought forward. We assume it's going to be some time in April, but who really knows? It says a lot about the ability of the new finance minister and our new Premier.

Never in the history of this province have we had a government that was so satisfied with its ability to put off the big problems for someone else to deal with as this one. This province needs some direction. It needs real management, and it needs a real plan to start to get its costs under control. Continuing to supply the current level simply isn't sustainable for this province in the short term or the long term.

Last year, after he delivered his report to the Legislature, Don Drummond penned a column for the Globe and Mail saying that tough choices were needed and growth alone wouldn't save Ontario this time. Mr. Speaker, some tough choices need to be made here in the province of Ontario.

I can tell you that I was here when the new cabinet was sworn in. One of the first series of tough decisions

that the new Premier was going to have to make was to choose who was going to be in her cabinet. She acknowledged at the time that it was a very difficult thing for her to pick those who were going to sit in her cabinet. What did she do? Mr. Speaker, she increased the size of the cabinet by 25%. Her very first decisions as the new Premier of Ontario proved that she didn't have what it takes to make the tough decisions of running the province. She added five new cabinet ministers, taking it from 22 to 27, increasing the size of cabinet by 25%. So in her very early days, she has shown us that she doesn't have what it takes to make tough decisions.

You know what else she has done? She hasn't brought in anything new. Everything old is supposedly new again. The bills that we're debating in this Legislature are the same bills that we were debating when Dalton McGuinty was the Premier. We haven't seen any kind of a vision from this new Premier. I guess it's difficult when you're continuing to live under the cloud of scandal that has been pervasive in this government for the last nine and a half or 10 years.

That it has come to a supply bill to put off the budget is a disappointment that lies squarely at the feet of the finance minister and this government. I ask, how long can we put off these tough decisions? We can't put them off that much longer, because the longer we put off the decisions, the more we're going to have to pay to service the debt in the province of Ontario, a figure that's already in the \$11-billion or \$12-billion neighbourhood each and every year. Over the 127 days that the House was prorogued, we tacked another \$4 billion onto the debt in Ontario. How many billions more will have to be added before we start to see a plan from this government? How many billions more will be added before the finance minister pulls his head out of the sand and decides to finally deal with the debt and deficit problems that are facing Ontario? That's what I want to know, and it's what people in my riding of Prince Edward-Hastings want to know.

Belleville city council wants to know exactly how much it's going to cost for them to pay for their fire department and how many of them are going to be on the sunshine list. I can tell you that there are only eight members of the fire department that aren't on the sunshine list. I suspect it will probably be next year because this government doesn't appear to be poised to do anything when it comes to the broken arbitration system in the province.

In Bancroft, in Prince Edward county in my riding, they want to know exactly how far into the red they're going to have to go in order to afford police services before the province realizes that small municipalities simply don't have the capacity to pay that larger municipalities have. The debt and deficit problems that this province is experiencing are too serious to be punted to a future government; we have to start making the decisions now. The debt has doubled under the McGuinty-Wynne government, the deficit has soared to record levels, but this finance minister is okay with

tiddling his thumbs instead of bringing in a real economic plan to this House.

We can't continue to twiddle our thumbs any longer in Ontario. It's time for some action, and I can tell you that our leader, Tim Hudak, has put forward many different plans out there for the government to consider. The question I have for the finance minister is: How much longer will we continue to stall? How much longer will we continue to govern, because that's obviously what's most important for the party on the other side: to stay in power. It's very clearly become a do-nothing government. How much longer do you intend to maintain the status quo on the other side of the House? How much longer do you intend to procrastinate on bringing forward a real plan for Ontario? How much longer are we going to have to wait for you to get down to business and actually start making the tough decisions and start doing your job?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to rise today to add to the debate currently ongoing regarding Bill 33, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013, also known as the Supply Act.

I've said this before, but it bears repeating, because I have to say that I was truly optimistic to return to Queen's Park. I was hopeful for the upcoming session, hopeful that after 126 days, Premier Wynne would finally break the McGuinty padlock and open democracy's door, returning the House and getting MPPs back to work on behalf of the ridings and people who elected us to represent them here at Queen's Park. I had hoped that this House would see real change, and Ontario would finally be able to move forward, but sadly, after being back for nearly five weeks, it is very evident that nothing has changed. The government party is sitting in different chairs; they have different titles and new business cards, but just as a zebra can't change its stripes, neither can the failed McGuinty-Wynne government.

Today we are debating the Supply Act, the bill which will allow this government to continue spending and, in my view, to continue to be reckless with Ontario's fiscal purse. Let's be clear: This bill is going to pass. The NDP, who talk a tough game back at home, have already signalled that they will be voting for this bill and are in agreement with government spending continuing to grow and grow and grow, with no priorities and absolutely no focus, but that's what we've come to expect from the third party, the NDP: tough talk, but very little action and very little resolve to hold the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals to account. We've seen it in the horse racing file, and now we're seeing it with this Supply Act.

You see, Speaker, the past five weeks of the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals' legislative agenda have been telling. They still do not recognize the crisis facing this province, and have failed to produce a plan to help kick-start the economy, simply continuing to do what they have always done, as is the case with today's supply bill, Bill 33, but it just won't get it done.

February was the 74th consecutive month that Ontario's unemployment rate has been higher than the national average. Of course, Premier Wynne may feel she deserves a pat on the back for creating more jobs in her cabinet—now 25% larger—but there are still over half a million Ontario residents who woke up this morning without any job to go to. It's a real problem when the only sector that seems to be growing in Ontario is the government sector.

1720

As I said during question period this morning, 300,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in the province of Ontario. Well, there are now more than 300,000 additional people working in the broader public sector than when the Liberals came to power back in 2003. While the size and cost of government continue to skyrocket, as I said before, this is the 74th consecutive month where our unemployment rate has been higher than the national average. It's a real concern to me that the economic and jobs policy for the Liberals appears to be doing exactly what they've always done.

In contrast to the Liberals, our party, our leader, Tim Hudak, and the Ontario PCs have to date released a dozen different Paths to Prosperity discussion papers aimed at reining in reckless overspending and encouraging economic growth.

It seems like it is almost daily that we hear about another Liberal government scandal, another billion dollars being wasted, and Bill 33 is the very bill that allows those dollars to be spent, those dollars to be wasted and those deals to be signed. While it's business as usual for the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals and while the scandals continue to pile up, the taxpayers are being left with the bill. It seems that the culture of this government is scandal, waste and mismanagement. We could also add the words "secret deals" and "hidden documents" to that list.

Ontario families know they cannot trust the Liberal government to get to the bottom of these scandals. Further to my point, Premier Wynne's first five weeks and again this bill underline her unwillingness to make the necessary and urgent decisions needed to fix the Liberals' made-in-Ontario jobs and debt crisis.

When the new Premier says that she wants to build on Mr. McGuinty's legacy, I question how she could fail to recognize the amount of scandal that the McGuinty legacy is built on. Indeed, the McGuinty-Wynne legacy is a tale of injustice and mismanagement that has cost Ontario taxpayers billions and billions of dollars. Premier Wynne's first act was to increase cabinet by 25%, adding \$3 million more to Ontario's debt. That follows deliberate choices to hand the chequebook over to union bosses at the expense of students and parents, continue the expensive Feed-in Tariff program and park the Drummond commission's 362 recommendations permanently on the shelf.

We have seen no initiatives to reduce the size and cost to government, Speaker. Instead of restraint, we continue to have a government spending even more money, doub-

ling our debt over the past nine years while we're getting less. The estimates included with this bill show nothing but red ink continuing for Ontario's future. Fewer people are working outside the government, paying for more working inside the government with higher wages, benefits and pensions than those who are paying the taxes. We see reports from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business indicating public sector workers earn 27% more in wages, pensions and benefits than their counterparts in the private sector.

Ignoring the issues Ontario is facing is not a solution. We are facing the biggest jobs and debt crisis in our lifetimes. Anyone who has ever been faced with a crisis or an emergency will tell you that being cautious, being incremental, will not save you. The only way forward is to move confidently and boldly in the direction that you know is right. Ontario needs a new approach, one that will create jobs and stop reckless overspending. It's clear that the current government is not up to the challenge of doing this.

Speaker, we are five weeks into this government and we have seen nothing but the same old results. You would swear that Premier Dalton McGuinty and his political handlers had never left the building. To change the direction of our province, we need to change the team that leads it. The Ontario PC Party and opposition leader Tim Hudak are the only party with a comprehensive plan to end overspending and grow our economy.

Five months after the Liberal government shut down the Legislature and walked off the job, this Premier had an opportunity to change course and move Ontario onto the right path. But, regrettably for Ontario, Premier Wynne and her government chose to further entrench the Dalton McGuinty agenda. If the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals won't make the necessary decisions to get Ontario back on its feet, there's another party and leader who will, and it starts with opposing and standing up against the wasteful spending contained in Bill 33.

I am proud to say that, unlike the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals, the Ontario PC team has put forward a plan to rein in overspending, get our economic fundamentals right and grow the economy through our Paths to Prosperity white papers. They're bold ideas to create a leaner public service that delivers more value for less money; to lower taxes on businesses so they can invest and create jobs in our province; to reduce the heavy hand of the 300,000 regulations that stand between businesses and success; to fix the outdated labour laws that have made us uncompetitive and are costing us thousands and thousands of jobs; and to create more affordable energy for Ontario families by treating energy as an economic fundamental rather than a social experiment.

We can no longer be content by being first in debt and last in job creation. Ontario will rise again and reach its true potential, but only if we change the team that leads it. Our party is committed to working hard for Ontario families, and that is why we are offering real solutions for the disaster that this Liberal government has got us into.

The Liberals took power when Ontario was booming, and they're leaving it a complete disaster. They've chosen bankruptcy over prosperity, and we fundamentally oppose that approach. There has been no change and no renewal here at Queen's Park under this government.

While the politically easy thing to do may have been to let the supply bill pass as those in the third party have chosen to do—and Speaker, they continue to prop up this scandal-plagued government every time we turn around. They criticize about the gas plant scandal, they criticize about eHealth, but at the end of the day, they prop up. They propped up Dalton McGuinty for a year, they propped up Kathleen Wynne, and they're continuing to do that. It's an absolute shame.

There's one party standing up for Ontario families, small businesses and farmers in this Legislature, and it's the Ontario PC Party. As I said, there has been no change here, and the easy thing to do would be to let the supply bill pass, but we have a responsibility to demand a plan that brings about a major change in direction.

We clearly need a new approach—it's something I hear in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex—to deal with the debt that's heading toward \$550 billion by 2019-20. When this government took over, the debt in the province of Ontario was around \$125 billion. They've been completely reckless, and they are leaving Ontario a complete disaster. Of course, with 600,000 people

unemployed, they have no plan for the future of this province, and they continue to make decisions that kill jobs in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Milloy has moved second reading of Bill 33, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013. Is it the pleasure of the House that that motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I have just received the following notice: Pursuant to standing order 28(h), the vote on Bill 33, the Supply Act, is deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, March 27, 2013.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

Hon. John Milloy: Madam Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those in favour, say "aye." This motion carries.

The House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1729.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
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Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 27 March 2013

Mercredi 27 mars 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 27 March 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 mars 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct my record. Yesterday, when referring to testimony from cabinet staffer Tiffany Turnbull, who told us she saw at least one Project Vapour-lock email every week, I stood and said we had absolutely no Vapour-lock documents. I was, of course, referring to the Vapour-lock documents she swore she saw, which, as we confirmed, are indeed missing. They are indeed missing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member. As all members have the right to correct their record, the member has, and it is a point of order.

Point of order, the member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a similar point of order to correct my record. I alluded to the fact yesterday that we saw some documents related to Project Vapour-lock and that we hadn't seen any documents. I was referring to the documents Tiffany Turnbull was referring to in testimony yesterday at the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. I do acknowledge that 99.99% of documents that we have to date do not contain the words "Project Vapour-lock," and also in the same—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I accept the reality that people do correct the record, but it's not to add any comment other than to correct the record, I remind the members.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 20, 2013, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: First of all, I'd like to note that I will be splitting my time this morning with the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills.

It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Premier McGuinty's—I'm sorry, Premier Wynne's—speech from

the throne. So meet the new boss; same as the old boss. With all due respect, perhaps I should say that it's the McWynnety government.

I believe the goal of government is to respect the people who elected it, to be committed and accountable to every taxpayer who pays the bills of the province. I have not seen that level of respect in the words of the speech from the throne, nor have I seen the commitment to accountability from this government in their actions thus far.

Mr. Speaker, over 600,000 men and women woke up this morning without a job to go to. In December, it was reported that the unemployment rate in Chatham-Kent-Essex was over 9%. Tinkering around the edges will not help these men and women; bold and decisive action will.

For over a year now, the Ontario PC Party have been putting ideas on the table that will help pull this province out of the mess created by a disastrous decade of the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals. These recommendations have gone unnoticed by this government.

Back in February, I sent out a news release to the local papers in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex with my initial reaction to the speech from the throne. One of my concerns with the speech from the throne had to do with farming in Ontario. At the time, I had mentioned I was concerned that the Premier and self-appointed Agriculture and Food Minister Wynne did not bother to mention any specific plans for agriculture. I wondered how seriously the Premier took the issues of farmers and their families.

The throne speech was made over five weeks ago, so let's take a look at what has happened over the past few weeks. Since that time, it has become known that Premier Wynne was forced to hold a second, secret swearing-in ceremony as the new Minister of Agriculture and Food after forgetting the word "food" in the title. Well, forgetting the word could have been an honest mistake. Perhaps there was little time to juggle a key ministry while fulfilling the duties of running the province.

We know that the Premier didn't have time to visit the 75th anniversary of the London Farm Show—Ontario's largest indoor farm show, by the way, Speaker. It is somewhat of a tradition for agricultural ministers, as the former Minister of Agriculture knows, to attend, and many rural residents, including many from my riding, were surely disappointed by the fact that the Premier was a no-show. It would have been an opportunity to engage with rural Ontarians, but photo ops are more important, it seems.

The government has since introduced its Local Food Act, but many in the agriculture industry do not feel that this bill does enough to support farmers and local food. Although it contains some pleasantries, it does little to address the challenges that farmers are facing, such as endless amounts of red tape and increasing hydro costs.

Looking back to February, I was skeptical of a promise made by the Wynne Liberals to increase local decision-making powers. At the time, I said that it was too little, too late for my riding, as we've already been impacted by many projects. This is from the throne speech, and I'd like to get this into the record:

"Your government intends to work with municipalities on other issues, too.

"Because communities must be involved and connected to one another....

"They must have a voice in their future and a say in their integrated, regional development.

"So that local populations are involved from the beginning if there is going to be a gas plant or a casino or a wind plant or a quarry in their hometown.

"Because our economy can benefit from these things, but only if we have willing hosts."

Interjections.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I must be hitting a nerve, Speaker, because they're getting a little riled up on the government side. That's a good thing, I must add. That's a very good thing.

Interjection: When you're taking flak, you're over the target.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: That's right.

In my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, you know, you can hardly look anywhere without seeing a wind turbine. Recently it was announced that an additional 124 turbines would be installed from the Chatham Municipal Airport to the western border of Ridgetown, south of the 401. Residents who are opposed to them feel helpless. Does this sound like a local population was involved from beginning to end? Sadly, it was too little, too late for the people of my riding.

Two other communities recently made the news for their desperate resistance to wind turbines. Bluewater, in the beautiful riding of Huron-Bruce, and West Grey, in the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, have had their struggles in their fight against these projects.

The following is a quote from an article in the Toronto Star on Friday, March 22: "Two rural Ontario municipalities are putting expensive ... hurdles in front of wind farms in their communities.

"Councils in Bluewater, on the Lake Huron shoreline, and West Grey, about 165 kilometres northwest of Toronto, have passed bylaws squeezing more money from prospective wind developments.

"Politicians say they're trying to protect the interests of their communities, where many people greet large-scale wind farms with apprehension: West Grey, for example, has formally declared itself an 'unwilling host' for big wind farms." Good for them.

Specifically, West Grey passed a resolution back in 2010 asking the province for a moratorium on wind turbines until a proper study by a third party regarding the health, well-being and safety of residents near wind farms could, in fact, be established.

0910

They, like many municipalities around this province, are trying to do what they feel is right for their communities. They are voicing the opinions of their people, who are opposed to having wind farms forced upon them by the heavy and all-too-distant hand of this provincial government.

The Liberal way forward: Fill up ridings you don't hold with wind farms that residents don't want, and then tell them that you value their input after ignoring them for years? Does that sound almost like an oxymoron? I ask: Do Bluewater and West Grey sound like local populations that were involved from beginning to end, as mentioned in the throne speech? Well, I think not.

Further on the issue of expanding local decision-making, I was saddened to hear that Premier Wynne has opposed the notions of citizens having a direct say in whether or not casinos are built in their neighbourhoods. It's no surprise that the people of rural Ontario are so skeptical of Liberal promises.

One last element of the throne speech that drew my suspicion was the promise to work together and co-operate with the opposition. From the speech, I quote the following: "For the benefit of the entire province, your government intends to work with opposition parties, in a spirit of renewed co-operation, to get the people's business done."

Since the throne speech was delivered, it has been more of the same from the Liberals. Despite calls to be more co-operative, we are still faced with a government that must be dragged kicking and screaming to accountability. For example, in the last few weeks, we've learned that there are even more files on eHealth, and we have the justice committee still working hard, looking for answers in the gas plant scandal.

Speaker, I have a saying that I'd like to share, and I'm sure this House has heard it from time to time. It's really simple: When you mess up, you fess up. I call on this government to get everything out in the open and clear your record. It's one thing to quote renewal, but another thing altogether to achieve it.

In closing, I have some thoughts that I'd like to share with all members of this Legislature. It's something that I strive to live by as well, and here are the thoughts to think on: Keep your thoughts positive, because your thoughts become your words. Keep your words positive, because your words become your actions. Keep your actions positive, because your actions become your habits. Keep your habits positive, because your habits become your destiny.

Though we're only just a little over a month removed from the speech from the throne, the words found within have already given way to troubling actions. The Liberals have continued some habits—some of the same habits,

rather—that have gotten Ontario into such a financial mess, with the same unwillingness to admit the error of their ways. In doing so, they may have just cemented their legacy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Just taking a couple of minutes here, joining the debate—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry. Questions and comments first.

There seems to be a mix-up here. There was someone sharing their time; they didn't stand up. So now we'll go to questions and comments.

The member from Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you, Speaker. I'm happy to join the debate on a Wednesday morning here in Toronto. Grandma Grace, if you're watching, good morning. Thanks for joining us.

Following on the comments of the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex on the throne speech from the new Premier—and I want to extend my congratulations to the new Premier and my commitment and, I think, our shared commitment in this caucus to actually get results in this Parliament.

People I speak to in Davenport are less concerned about which party you represent and instead how this Parliament is going to deliver for people in this province. So they don't care if their food is brought to them by the Liberals or the Conservatives or the NDP; they just want to make sure that they have food. They don't care if their job is brought to them by any particular party; they just want a job. That's the thing we have to aim for here.

I heard some good things in the budget speech. The tone was kind. I think the member who just spoke speaks with a bit of resistance to actually working together. That is not a problem. I think that we absolutely need to work together, because the problems facing this province require co-operation. They're challenging, they're complex, and we need members in here to actually get to work and do that. I don't really love the kind of resistance to working together.

However, I do resent the fact that the new Premier would insinuate that this is a new government, because it's just clear: It doesn't fool anybody in Davenport, and I don't think it fools anybody in this province, to call this a new government. This is the same government, and it's a government that has had 10 years now to deliver. We need to see the good intentions, the good words in that throne speech, met by some action.

I'm happy to read the newspaper this morning and see that the Liberal government has considered now some of the proposals we're putting forward to actually regulate corporations in this province and make sure that people's lives are a bit more affordable. We've got other ideas that are practical, that would get things moving here. I hope that they'll include our proposal to close corporate tax loopholes so that we can actually get some funding that's badly needed for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I had the opportunity to listen to a very articulate speech from the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex. In fact, it would be nice to get that riding changed to Chatham-Kent-Leamington, which would actually reflect the geographic boundaries of that area, and I know the member wants to work on that.

Just a couple of things this morning: We're very pleased that the Premier, as Minister of Agriculture and Food, yesterday announced three more agreements with the horse racing industry in the province of Ontario: Georgian Downs, in Innisfil; Fort Erie Race Track—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —and of course, Flamboro—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, could we get a little louder, if you could? Guess what, folks? The hammer's coming down today quickly.

Go ahead.

Hon. Jeff Leal: We're making progress on that file, which is important for rural Ontario.

But one of the things I'm very concerned about in the Leamington area, of course—we have that fine operation, HJ Heinz, that was recently acquired by Warren Buffett. The federal government has proposed some changes to container sizes, and we're troubled about that. The former Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Mr. McMeekin, has been pressuring the federal ag minister in Ottawa, Mr. Ritz, and the new minister has been pressuring him. We're very concerned about this unregulated container size that may have a tremendous impact on that operation in Leamington—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Nepean-Carleton.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I know that the member supports it. He needs to work—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay. I'm glad that the member's got her voice back, but the bottom line is, that's her last warning.

Continue.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, if I get a little time put back on the clock, I also want to acknowledge a response that was made to the member's colleague yesterday, the member from Perth-Wellington, when Minister Chiarelli said—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Your time's up. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'd like to follow up my colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex. He gave a fine speech and identified quite a few of the shortcomings of this throne speech, which are many.

The government has managed to avoid a lot of the serious problems—nearly all the serious problems—that we have in this province of Ontario. They didn't speak to our debt. They didn't speak to our deficit. We're not going to

be able to meet the elimination of our deficit by 2017, like they keep saying they will. They keep trying to tell us that everything is under control, yet they haven't talked about eliminating any serious spending.

The Green Energy Act is something we just cannot afford, and it's going to cost us tens of billions of dollars. They haven't talked about a wage freeze for public sector salaries, which is 55% of our budget in this province of Ontario, and we can't get away with not doing that.

They haven't talked about the unaffordability of our defined benefit pensions, which is a problem that is on the radar and that we can't avoid, and we have to make serious changes there to install sustainability in the pensions for our public sector for the future.

0920

They haven't talked about job creation. They haven't talked about the need to do labour reform. We have to do serious labour reform in the province of Ontario to create an environment where jobs can be created by the private sector. We need to change the apprenticeship ratio for trades; that would triple the number of apprentices that could be hired by industry when there's a demand for those workers. They haven't talked about changing training of people in community colleges to match workers who are trained to the needs of industry, which has been a shortcoming of our education system.

In short, they've missed the point, and we're not going to get the job done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions, comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's with pleasure that I rise to talk about the throne speech. There's a lot of good things and very nice words that were said through the throne speech, which I can take back and talk to constituents back home. I'm looking forward to going back home over our constituency week and over the Easter weekend to have a chat with them.

One of the things that our party has been stressing, really, is a balanced approach and affordability. I can tell you what it doesn't mean: Cutting ServiceOntario services throughout the north is what it doesn't mean. That's not a balanced or an affordable way of providing those services, which is exactly what this government is doing.

Cutting the ONTC services and not having a proper transportation strategy for northern Ontario: That is not what affordability and a balanced approach is. Not assisting a lot of seniors and underprivileged individuals throughout this province on their HST, which is a direct savings that could be done through eliminating it on their hydro bill, which is something that we had advocated for, for a very long time—these are some of the things that we're looking to get done within this upcoming budget.

We've made suggestions to this government and we hope that we see them reflected in the upcoming budget that is going to come through. One of them is a 15% cut on auto insurance. That's something that is balanced and affordable, and that is plausible that we can do. A five-day home care guarantee: Again, this is not something that is going to take this province to the bank. This is

something that we know is needed in this province. Eliminating those corporate tax loopholes: How can I go back home and explain that, "I'm sorry but your trip that you're going to have at the restaurant or your evening that you're going to take your kids out to the hockey game, you can't write it off, but the bigger businesses can." And that would bring a direct \$1.3 billion back—maintain it—into this province. So, let's look at this. Let's take a balanced approach, and let's keep affordability at the forefront.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker. Again, I'd like to thank the members from Davenport, the Minister of Rural Affairs, from Peterborough; also the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills and, of course, the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for your comments. I do appreciate that very much.

I mentioned earlier in my speech that when you make a mistake, you should admit to it, or like I like to say, when you mess up, you fess up. Well, since I've been privileged to represent the members from Chatham-Kent-Essex since being elected back in October of 2011, I've yet to hear this government acknowledge mistakes. They won't fess up, and yet we've seen lots of mess-ups, as I might add.

They talk a good game, Speaker; they truly do. I've got to give them credit for that. They talk a good game, but unfortunately, they've been talking a good game for the last 10 years, and we know where that's taken us so far. The debt, when they came into power, was about \$125 billion. Today, as it stands, it's around \$275 billion. I take a look at that and I say, "Well, that's quite a track record." Again, you know what? They talked a good game but they don't walk their talk. They don't do that. It's spend, spend, spend. And, unfortunately, that has now got our province in a dire, dire strait, and it's going to take a long time to start digging our way out of it.

Speaker, I'd like to remind the government and the opposition—the third party—that PCs have a plan. We have a plan to get this province back on track. We offer the hope that is needed; it's our Paths to Prosperity. So far, we've issued around 12 or 13 different Paths to Prosperity in different ways, looking at different ministries to pull things out. Right now, this government is killing, and we hope that everything will get straightened around.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to stand and speak, always, on behalf of the people of Parkdale-High Park, and in fact for all Ontarians.

Because this is the throne speech, in case people are wondering what we're debating—and it's actually the very first motion that the government put forward, and a confidence one at that—I just wanted to take the opportunity, because I haven't had that opportunity before, to congratulate the new Premier, Premier Wynne, the first woman—as a feminist, I applaud that—and also the first openly gay woman, and I applaud that as well, as some-

one who has been active on the LBGT file for 40 years now—40 years; who knew I was that old? So congratulations; two firsts. I just wanted to make sure that I extended that.

When we're talking about the throne speech, of course we're talking about something that deals in generalities. My first reaction, I have to say, to the throne speech and to the generalities that were put forward was that this was a pretty utopian document. I mean, if you actually look through it and read what has been promised, you're really looking at a completely and utterly transformed Ontario that looks, really, nothing like the Ontario that we all live in.

I know that she wasn't planning on being facetious, but towards the end of the throne speech it says, "We will not over-promise." Well, my goodness, the promises abound for the first few pages of the throne speech, so I wanted to look at some of those promises. After all, this isn't a new government. It's a new Premier, but it's not a new government. It's a government that has been in place for 10 long years—for 10 years—most of that time in a majority role. We all know in this place that when you're the majority government, you can do just about anything you want. The opposition can scream and yell, rant and rave, but the government has its way, and that's the reality.

So what has this government done with its way over 10 years? What is the end result? I remind everyone who's listening and watching that Premier Wynne was at the cabinet table for most of that time—not all of that time—and that she voted with the government, with Dalton McGuinty, on all of those major objectives.

For example, someone who came from a background in education as a trustee, who was known as "progressive" back then—this is a woman who stood up and voted with Dalton McGuinty and the cabinet for Bill 115, one of the most regressive pieces of legislation that collective bargaining and that unions have seen in this province for a long time—since the Mike Harris days. She voted for it. She did not absent herself; she did not vote against it; she did not sit on her hands. She voted for it. The damage of that bill is still being undone in our schools.

This is a government, I remind you, that has the worst record, the absolutely worst record, of investment in post-secondary education. We have the worst investment per capita in our students of any province in Canada. We also have the highest student debt of any province in Canada. We have the highest tuition fees of any province in Canada. Yet in the throne speech it talks a great deal about youth—youth employment, working with colleges and universities. Yet after 10 years, that's the net result of a Liberal government: the worst record on post-secondary education in Canada.

Let's take another file that's near and dear to my heart, and that's housing: the absolute worst record in Canada on an investment-per-capita basis on bringing forth any sort of new housing—any sort of new housing. Of course, this is a government that will say, "Well, it's the federal

government's fault." Well, of course it is, in part. Federally, we need a national housing program. But this government, this provincial Liberal government, has had a role to play and has not played it, has not done what it should be doing.

Hence, we have over 150,000 families waiting an average of 10 to 12 years for a place to live. That's an abysmal record. That's an abysmal record—over 70,000 in the GTA alone. These are real families with real stories. This is the record of this government after 10 years, most of which was majority, most of which the current Premier sat at the cabinet table and voted in lockstep with the designs of the rest of her party, and that's the end result of it.

0930

Look at the poverty file: We have high hopes on this side in the New Democratic Party for action on that file, but what have we seen after 10 years of Liberal rule? Again, with the current Premier at the cabinet table, we've seen one of the worst records in poverty. These are the so-called social justice portfolios. This is supposed to be a social justice Premier, and yet we have one in seven children living in poverty in the province of Ontario—one in seven. We have one of the worst records of families living in poverty, and again, under this government's watch, we cut back on the community start-up funds.

These are the funds accessed by people on social assistance if they have to move or if they're a woman who's fleeing a domestic violence situation in her own home. She has to access those funds, otherwise she doesn't have the money to get out and to get safe for herself and her children. This government cut those funds—they cut those funds. A social justice Premier cut those funds. That's the reality on the ground, the lived experience of Ontarians after 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard a lot of talk about integrity and forward thinking in the throne speech, a lot of utopian language, one might say. Yet over 10 years we have seen one after another scandal—scandals that speak to a lack of integrity, scandals like the gas plant, the so-called Project Vapour; scandals like the debacle at Ornge; \$1 billion wasted on eHealth. When you look at what is similar about all of these scandals, you see Liberal appointees making huge sums of money, spending huge sums of money, billions of dollars that could have gone to help that woman fleeing that domestic violence, could have gone to help that child have a decent breakfast so that they could study in school. That money could have gone to all of the above. This so-called social justice Premier at the cabinet table was in lockstep with the political decisions, many of them to spend that money in that way and still continue to spend that money in that way in many of these government agencies, and yet not on the files that the spin would have us say is indicative of a progressive government.

Let's look at transit: It got a lot of play in the media, but might I point out that after 10 years of Liberal government, most of it in majority with the current Premier

at the cabinet table, almost \$5 billion was taken out of Transit City, setting us up for failure. We over here in the New Democratic Party supported Transit City. We supported uploading the cost of the operations of the Toronto Transit Commission, which is what past governments have done. This government had 10 years to act on the transit file, and what have they done? Has it affected one person, Mr. Speaker, waiting for a bus, waiting for a streetcar, waiting for a subway in the city of Toronto? I can tell you that in my riding of Parkdale–High Park, there is a great deal of concern about transit, and they look again to this government and their past record and they don't see much action at all. They see a lot of spin. Remember Move 2020? Remember that one? We're not moving, and we're getting closer to the year 2020. We're not moving at all.

One can say that the people of my riding of Parkdale–High Park treat anything that comes out of this government, now that they've pressed the reset button, with a fair degree of scepticism. Where's the transit? After all the announcements, shovels in the ground, where's the transit? So that's the transit file. Now we're hearing, "Well, maybe that will all change with the budget." We live in hope in the New Democratic Party.

In fact, a very loud message came through to me from my constituents that they want to see things done. As you heard from the member from Davenport, they don't care what colour it is that accomplishes what needs to be accomplished; they just need something—anything—to be accomplished. That's what they need.

They said to me, very clearly, "Work with the government. Get what you can done." That's what we're doing. But we're feeling frustrated because, after all, we've now seen the new Premier, the socially progressive Premier, in place for, what is it, just over a month now.

What are the bills that are coming forward from the government? What are the bills coming forward? Well, the good food act—I mean, please. With all the promises for a utopian Ontario in the throne speech, we get a good food week? Is that what we get? A good food week—is that really the best that can come forward?

After all the promises in the throne speech, after all of the promises, do we get a very, very limp bill, the Ornge bill, that even the current administration at Ornge says won't solve the problem—after all the promises for a utopian Ontario, is this what we get? Action on our member's bill on tanning beds? I mean, it's an important bill; it's an important action. But, really?

I don't see anything about tanning beds, I don't see anything about good food weeks, and I don't see anything about lip service to a new administration at Ornge in the throne speech. I see grand vision and huge promises of a utopian Ontario, but, a month in, I don't see the bills to back it up. I don't see the discussion or the debate in this place to bring anything of these promises into fruition.

Now, we're practical in the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker, as you know. We are practical. We are asking the bare minimum of this government in order to

support them in the budget—the bare minimum. We get that this will not be a New Democratic Party budget. We were not the government. We wish that we were; we are not. But we need a bare minimum—a bare minimum. We would be satisfied with a bare minimum, not the lofty dreams and goals of the throne speech—just the bare minimum.

Action on closing corporate tax loopholes is almost \$2 billion in corporate tax loopholes, so that would feed a lot of children breakfast. That would provide a lot of housing. That would provide transit. Almost \$2 billion, but nothing, nada: We're not seeing—we're hearing. We're hearing the talk; we're not seeing the action on closing those corporate tax loopholes. Again, a bare minimum demand.

We're asking for the First Start jobs youth program, a very concrete suggestion that we've put forward about jobs for youth because, after all, we've lost hundreds of thousands of good manufacturing jobs and replaced them, as we've heard, with precarious employment. Some 50% of all the jobs in the GTA are precarious. That means, in answer to the question, "Do you think you'll have your job next year?" the answer was no. This is the reality of working in the GTA, working in our province. We've asked for action on that; but good food week? I don't think good food week's going to cut it.

We've asked for a five-day home care guarantee. Again, over and over again, our leader, Andrea Horwath, has asked about a commitment to that one small demand. It's not a huge demand; it's a small demand, a bare minimum demand for support. We haven't heard, Mr. Speaker, a promise.

So we still have seniors and others languishing, and this makes no economic sense, of course, many of them in high-expense emergency-ward beds waiting for good home care, and they're not getting it.

0940

We have asked for a 15% cut to auto insurance rates. We're going to be debating that this afternoon. We're hearing some positive signs, but they're signs only. We haven't heard concrete commitments to reducing the insurance burden on our drivers. Many folk in the 905 have to get to work. They're in those precarious jobs as well. They need this. This is the bare minimum they need. And I want to say again that this is not the utopian grand vision of the throne speech. This is a simple, little, practical demand. Can they do it? We haven't heard yet.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On the poverty file—and I speak directly to my friend the Minister of Community and Social Services on this one—we are hoping for the bare minimum demand, the \$200 that people get when they work or if they get money from other sources and they're on social assistance, which, by the way, is so pathetically low. You can't live on \$600 in the city of Toronto, and yet we claw back earnings. You can barely live on ODSP, and that's just around the \$1,000 mark. And we

claw back anything they earn? What kind of justice or morality is that? We've asked for the bare minimum, that the clawbacks end for that \$200. There's lots more we need—my goodness, lots more we need—but this is the bare minimum. We haven't seen a bill yet; we haven't seen action yet.

We've also heard, of course, about balancing the books. We hear from our friends to the right of us, literally and figuratively, that they'd like to see more balancing of the books. They pointed out, and quite rightly, about how this government has doubled the real debt, as well as, of course, the deficit. What they failed to point out is that the New Democratic Party has the very best record of balancing the books across Canada in provincial governments—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not in Ontario.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo:—except for one notable exception, and that was a gentleman called Bob Rae. All I can say is Bob's their uncle now. Bob is now the leader of the Liberal Party. He's the only exception to that rule. So not only have we got the best record of balancing the books, but of course, the Liberals, as one might expect, have the worst in provincial leadership.

Again, we have called—and I was heartened to read our leader's words, "A balanced approach to a balanced budget." I was heartened to read that those very words were used in the throne speech by the new Premier Wynne herself. A balanced approach to a balanced budget—have we seen that? We haven't seen that action yet.

This is the problem. Really, between the thought and the act falls the shadow, if I might paraphrase. Here we have the thought, the throne speech, with its grand vision of a completely new Ontario—not the Ontario any of us live in, particularly those who have lost jobs, live in poverty, are about to be evicted, youth unemployed. It's not that Ontario, but a new Ontario. It's all outlined. It's beautifully done in the throne speech.

Yet in the months that we have hit the reset button, that we have a new Premier, we have the same old actions. We have bills that accomplish virtually nothing, put forward with great debate as if they accomplish a great deal. We don't see anything in the throne speech reflected in the bills put forward in the last month. And this, after all, is a Legislature that deals with bills. It deals with laws and changes to laws. Where are the new laws? Where are the courageous bills that would bring us a new province? Where is the dramatic action that would feed the children, house the homeless, get kids who can't afford to back into universities, provide jobs for the young? Where is any of that? It isn't in this chamber. It isn't here.

We, in the New Democratic Party, want to make this government work. We want to see the government live up to its throne speech. That's what we'd like to see. We would like to see the action from across the aisle that they have outlined in this throne speech, and we live in hope. I'll leave it at that.

It's Easter week. We all live in hope, and we wait to see the actual legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I have listened very attentively to the member from Parkdale–High Park in response to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

On some of the things that the member has said, I don't fault her, and I have to agree. Of course, when we come into the House and we express our views, they are expressed in this House, and of course we are protected by our own laws if we are right or wrong.

But I have to say that I want to pick on one particular item, and it's transportation. As someone that has been around for a few years now—I have served in the good old city of North York; some of us may remember that. I also served on Metro council, and I served as chair of the transportation committee at the time, afterwards serving in this wonderful place here, sir.

I remember that when we had an NDP administration in the city of Toronto, we were delayed five years—five years—to get the content and approval for the subway extension to York University, which is a city in itself. On a daily basis, we have some 55,000 people, between students, professors and teachers.

But the fact is this, Speaker: When I came to this House, then we got the approval to go through, and the new NDP mayor delayed for three years, because they couldn't decide if they wanted the subway extension or they should have an LRT. They couldn't decide it.

We thought, personally, "We have \$8.4 billion on the table." We've been saying—the Premier has been saying, the former and the present—"Get on with it. The money is there. Get on with it." So it's not us, Speaker. Let's look at somebody else.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have a moment or two to respond to the remarks made by the member for Parkdale–High Park.

I would certainly agree with her that the question of over-promising in this throne speech is a point that we should certainly all look at in terms of what in fact was said. The throne speech is something that should set a tone and provide a vision and certainly an idea of what to expect in the future. But what we saw in this was the platitudes. One of them was "without letting anyone slip through the cracks." I couldn't help but wonder about the 600,000 people who are unemployed in this province and if they would see themselves as people who haven't slipped through the cracks.

Another one that I think is a little difficult to juxtapose against the realities we face is again a quote: "A clear message that Ontario's finances are in steady hands...." Well, when we look at the committees that are investigating Ornge and the gas plant move, we're looking at—maybe those are steady hands, but they're certainly not ones that operated in the interests of the people of Ontario.

It's very clear that there's a reason why, in the lead-up to her winning leadership of the party, Premier Wynne never once talked about fiscal responsibility. It is in no literature; it is in no speeches that have circulated.

I think that those things are reason for us to feel we cannot accept this throne speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's a pleasure to stand up and respond to some of the comments that were made by my colleague the member from Parkdale–High Park.

I wanted to elaborate on one of the points that she raised, and that's about home care. In the throne speech, it does state that the "government will continue to expand support available for people in their homes, and to address the needs of men and women across Ontario currently waiting for the home care services they require."

0950

Last weekend, I was fortunate enough to go to Rainy River, where I met with a 90-year-old woman. She is very capable; she's very independent. She's really quite an amazing and impressive woman. She lives on her own; she takes care of herself.

She had the misfortune of injuring herself. She went to her doctor, and she was extremely concerned. She was concerned about her health, but she was also concerned about her independence. Her doctor then prescribed home care. He really tried to set her mind at ease, and he assured her that she would be looked after when she returned from the doctor in Fort Frances to Rainy River.

Now, Mr. Speaker, she has waited and waited. She has called the number that they've given her for home care services, and nobody has called her back. In the interim, she has had a bandage that has needed changing. She has had to rely on the emergency room services in Rainy River—thank goodness, they're still there—and she has had to rely on her friends. This is a woman who is falling through the cracks, and she's afraid. As I said, she's afraid for her health; she's afraid for her independence. She's otherwise very healthy and very capable.

This is a prime example: If we were to put these supports in place to help people to live in their homes longer, it's better for her; it's better for the system.

So I am calling on the MPPs to come together, to work together, and to implement the five-day home care guarantee, because this is something that is within our power right now and we can make these changes in the budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to rise in this House this morning and talk about the speech from the throne. The speech from the throne, as we all know, is a document which sets out the government's vision and also a plan for the year to come. In this document, the Premier lays out our government's vision for economic growth, job creation and also building a fair society in this wonderful province of ours, Ontario.

In this document, the Premier talks about job creation. Over the past few weeks, since this government came to office, we have done quite a lot, actually. I'm just going to mention a few items.

For example, in my ministry, we have invested \$100 million in the Ontario Brain Institute. This investment is going to leverage a \$150-million investment from other sources. The scientists, the neurologists—500 of them in Ontario—are going to continue the world-class research on discoveries, on making people's lives much easier, and on making treatment of diseases such as dementia, Alzheimer's and other diseases—which have their origins in the brain—much easier for the people of Ontario.

We have invested \$36 million in 17 research projects in the city of Toronto, and we have invested \$50 million in the creation of the new venture capital, which is going to attract \$250 million from other sources, including from our federal government.

These are some of the economic measures we have done just in the past few weeks, since we came to office.

In the area of university students' fees, we continue to reduce the fees for 30% of students. Ontario university students have the lowest tuition fees in the province, actually, when you take 30% off—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Chatham–Kent–Essex.

The member from Parkdale–High Park has two minutes.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I remember very well the Minister of Transportation standing in this House and saying, in answer to a question, that it's a good thing for a politician to under-promise and over-deliver. I think, in summing up the throne speech, what I would say is it's a huge over-promise, and what we have seen is an enormous under-delivery. That's not just true of the throne speech. It's true of the last 10 years of Liberal rule in the province of Ontario, and it's beginning to tell. When the bills that come forward in the first few weeks of the new Premier's situation here in Ontario are things like a good food week, they're not delivering on what the people of Ontario need. They need jobs; they need health care.

We in the New Democratic Party have made some very, very small demands of this government, and we haven't seen action on any of them yet. We've asked for the closing of corporate loopholes. That's \$2 billion that could go to alleviating the problems of this province. We've asked for home care. We've asked for a five-day guarantee on wait on home care; we haven't seen it. We've asked for action on poverty, the very minimum action, to end the clawbacks; we haven't seen it. We've asked for action on youth getting jobs, and quite frankly, we haven't seen it. We've asked for action on insurance rates. We've heard some noises, Mr. Speaker, but we haven't seen it. Again, even on the modicum of demands we've made, we haven't seen action, and yet the promises of the throne speech are nothing if not grandiose and utopian. We have grandiose promises but very little

delivery. Let's see some delivery, I ask my friends from across the aisle. Let's see some action. We live in hope. All of Ontario is waiting. Let's do it. Let's get going.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 42(a), there have been 12 hours of debate on the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne. I'm now required to put the question.

On February 20, 2013, Ms. Wong moved, seconded by Mr. McNeely, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session."

Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry?

All those in favour of Ms. Wong's motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be deferred until after question period.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I know everybody's anticipating this motion, and no further business this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There being no further business for the moment, the House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 0957 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to introduce to the House two guests: Catherine Duval-Russell and Helene Paulyn. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to welcome the Westwater family from my riding of Oakville. Noah is a grade 7 student at Maple Grove Public School. He wants to spend a lot more time here; he's applying for the page program. He's joined by his sister Brooke, who's in Grade 5, and his mother, Susan, one of Ontario's great elementary school teachers.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'd like to welcome today, in the west gallery, Jeannette Chau and Scott Clark from the Ontario professional engineers association.

Mr. John Vanthof: Eric Guild is page captain today, and on this proud day, he is joined by his family, Kristen Guild, Angela Rowan and Dean Wallace. I'd like to welcome them to the House.

Hon. Michael Chan: From the wonderful riding of Markham-Unionville, I would like to welcome my constituent Joyce Riettie and Royston Richards from Jamaica.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to welcome back into the gallery my good friend, a young friend from North Bay, Ishmael Van Derassel.

Mr. Norm Miller: I am pleased to welcome to the members' west gallery Harold Wilson, PC candidate for the riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Kyara Wendling is a page here, and her sisters are joining her today in the west gallery: Matteya and Justine Wendling from Port Colborne.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to welcome here at Queen's Park today Asquith Allen from my riding of York-South Weston. He is VP of the federal and Ontario Young Liberals.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think we need to put this down in history: I have to admonish somebody for heckling a guest.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And he's still at it.

Mr. John O'Toole: From the great riding of Durham, I'd like to recognize page Andrew Hodgins and his parents, Charisma and Allan Hodgins, in the west gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce three people from my riding of St. Paul's. First is Mark Tishman, who is my constituency assistant; with him are James Molloy, an intern at my office, and Ehssan Taghavi, who is also helping to volunteer at my CO.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Save your voice.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. We owe an obligation to our youth to provide every opportunity we can for them to find good, well-paying jobs and to clear aside unnecessary obstacles to employment. We've heard quite clearly from Ontario manufacturers, industry, that the journeyman-to-apprentice ratio is an artificial barrier that belongs back in the 1970s. We have a plan that will help create 200,000 jobs—good, well-paying jobs—in the skilled trades today by modernizing our apprenticeship system and helping young people find opportunity in this great province.

I ask the Premier: Will you support the PC plan to bring our apprenticeship system into the 21st century?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities is going to want to address this issue specifically. I want to make the overarching comment, Mr. Speaker, that we are very, very concerned about making sure that young people are prepared for and have the training for the jobs that are available.

I've said consistently through the leadership and into this first period as Premier that the mismatch between

labour force and labour market is something that really does have to be addressed, and I think it's something that can be addressed if government works in partnership with business and works in partnership with labour.

In the jobs round tables that we've been holding around the province, this is a theme that we've heard over and over again. There are businesses that are willing and wanting to work with government, Mr. Speaker. The education sector wants to work with us so we can make that matchup work much better for young people.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I do appreciate that the Premier is very concerned, in her words, on the mismatch between training and job opportunities. We agree, and that's why we've brought forward initiatives to actually help address that, to clear aside an old, outdated piece of regulation from the 1970s. Granted, Speaker, the 1970s had some good things about it, but there are some things we should leave in the past: for example, disco, bell-bottoms and this outdated red tape that is having a real impact on our young people, preventing them from moving into good jobs.

I want to commend my colleague from Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop, who probably knows more about the skilled trades in Ontario than any of us here in the assembly. Mr. Dunlop is bringing forward a bill for second reading tomorrow entitled Helping Ontarians Enter the Skilled Trades Act. It will modernize the system to help connect people with jobs.

I ask you, Premier: Will the Ontario Liberal Party support this piece of legislation that would create 200,000 skilled trades jobs in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: First off, Mr. Speaker, their piece of legislation will not create any jobs. Apprenticeship ratios don't create jobs; projects create jobs. Investment in a skilled workforce creates jobs. A competitive corporate tax environment creates jobs. Apprenticeship ratios do not create jobs. I had the opportunity to meet with the CMA as well yesterday, and we had a very good talk about apprenticeship ratios.

Mr. Speaker, here's where we differ from the opposition: We're of the view that politicians should not be dictating this policy; that those that know the skilled trades—the industry itself—should have a say on apprenticeship ratios. We think that's a more responsible way to make those decisions. I don't know why the opposition are not onside with us on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, I started out hopeful with the Premier's initial answer, and then she handed it off to the minister, who's just giving us these stale, outdated talking points that just don't reflect the realities of the economy. It's certainly going to be disappointing for all those young people who want to get into the skilled trades in our province, be it the electricians, mechanics or precision machine operators.

I ask the minister—he says that industry should decide this issue. When the Canadian Federation of Independent Business says the single biggest obstacle preventing people from getting into skilled trades is this outdated journeyman-to-apprentice ratio—if you believe industry should say it—and the CFIB has said this—then surely you will put your old Dalton McGuinty talking points aside, with all due respect to the gentleman in the House here today, and you will support instead somebody who knows far more about the skilled trades, Garfield Dunlop. Will you, Minister, support this important piece—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

1040

Hon. Brad Duguid: If the Leader of the Opposition wanted to take a fresh approach, then he wouldn't want to be sticking to the status quo when it comes to making important decisions with regard to the skilled trades: apprenticeship ratios, issues to do with compulsory trades.

We're of the view that the days when politicians made those decisions in backrooms at Queen's Park should be gone. We're of the view that the College of Trades, which will take into consideration the expertise within the industry, is much better qualified—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're of the view that the people who work in the skilled trades are much better qualified to make these decisions than the Leader of the Opposition. So we're not going to stick with the status quo like the Leader of the Opposition wants to do. We're going to move forward to a new, exciting future—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll go back to the Premier on the same topic. I had hoped for better.

Considering that the unemployment rate among youth today, Premier, as you know, is 16.2%—here in the city of Toronto, it's even greater: high double digits, near 20%—I regret that the minister seems to be putting the special interests and the status quo ahead of the 200,000 youth who could benefit directly from Garfield Dunlop's bill.

I'm for moving forward. I'm for moving into the 21st century in these policies. I'm for joining the other seven provinces that are moving in this direction. I'm for Garfield Dunlop's bill. I'm for more good, well-paying jobs in the skilled trades.

I'll ask the minister: If almost every other province has moved in this direction, why is your government stuck in the 1970s when it comes to how it's approaching this issue?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not stuck in the 1970s. In terms of age, that wouldn't be a bad thing for me, but I'm not.

Mr. Speaker, all of us agree in this House that we want our young people to be able to find jobs. We have done so much in terms of providing opportunities. Yesterday I was in Clinton. I had the opportunity to meet with some students who are taking part in an agriculture Specialist High Skills Major. Specialist High Skills Majors were introduced under Premier Dalton McGuinty, and they have been a huge opportunity for young people to have co-op opportunities, to have the chance to learn—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Northumberland, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:—and to get some very specific skills so that when they graduate from high school, they're ready to go into a skilled trade or they're ready to go into a college program.

That's the kind of thing we need to be doing: dual credits, Mr. Speaker, working to make sure that the placements, internships and co-ops are in place. That's why working with business, labour and government, we can solve those problems.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think the Premier is mischaracterizing this issue. There are graduates from the Specialist High Skills Majors, there are graduates from pre-apprenticeship training programs and there are graduates from apprenticeship programs who can't find job opportunities in our province. The jobs are actually there, to be clear, but this outdated rule on the apprenticeship ratios has prevented them from moving into jobs here.

By way of example, a young man I met in Cornwall wanted to be an electrician—a burning desire to be an electrician. He even had a small business—his name is Ryan—who would hire him. But because the employer, the small business, did not have enough journeymen, he was not able to hire young Ryan, who couldn't get the job.

I worry that young talent is going to leave our province. They'll go to British Columbia; they'll go to Alberta; they'll go to BC. When I talk to these students, almost universally they say they've lost friends and family to other provinces.

Premier, why are you putting special interests ahead of these young people who want—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Leader of the Opposition is just plain wrong. We've doubled the amount of opportunities for young people, from 60,000 apprenticeships, when we took office, to 120,000. We want to do more. That's why we have an Apprenticeship Tax Credit that's providing incentives to businesses to hire apprentices.

I think, though, what the Leader of the Opposition is not doing is telling the full story here, because if we were to go to a one-to-one ratio across the board, what the Leader of the Opposition isn't saying is how many thousands of journeymen would his party be putting out of

work. What would that do to the long-term sustainability of the skilled trades as a career that we want to encourage our young people to get into?

Mr. Speaker, it's important that they tell the full story. We don't think politicians ought to be making these decisions; we think they should be left to the people in the skilled trades.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I would give a suggestion to the minister. Maybe if he could spend even one day travelling with Garfield Dunlop to every corner of this province, talking to people here, to understand better how this will create 200,000 jobs.

When I see the Heavy Construction Association of Toronto, Merit Ontario, the Ontario Electrical League, the Ontario General Contractors Association, the Ontario road builders, the sewer and water main, the CFIB—all of these employers that say, "We want to hire more people. We want to put more people to work in the skilled trades that are out there. We've got their resumés. We've got jobs lined up for them, but the Ontario Liberal Party and the special interests are putting roadblocks in our way."

Clear those roadblocks aside. Take the system into the 21st century. Put 200,000 skilled trades workers in the province to work today. Help our young people. Extend that hand. Why won't you get out of the 1970s, join the 21st century and create 200,000 jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Just a reminder that when the Leader of the Opposition was asking the question, I was hearing the same comments coming out of almost the same people while he's asking the question. That means you're heckling your leader. And for those—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, I'm not finished yet—which also means that as soon as I ask for that attention, it does not mean that this side needs to carry on either.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As well, the member from Renfrew, thank you for your help, but I'll do it myself.

Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the Leader of the Opposition's offer to spend a day with his colleague, but I would suggest maybe his colleague should want to spend a day with me as well, because he would spend some time talking to real tradespeople out there, people like a young man by the name of Jason Yull, a carpenter. This is what Jason had to say: "Somebody sitting behind a desk making decisions for tradespeople doesn't have the same effect

as a bunch of people who are out in the field seeing every day what goes on and what needs to be done.”

We agree with Jason. We think those decisions ought to be left up to those who know the field better than we do sitting here at Queen’s Park, the skilled tradespeople across this province. That’s why we set up the College of Trades, and the College of Trades will promote the skilled trades as a viable career opportunity for our young people right across this province.

Mr. Speaker, they should be onside with us on this. I can’t understand, for the life of me, why they’re not.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The leader of the third party.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Durham, come to order.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham, come to order. When I ask you for order, it doesn’t mean carry on; it means stop.

The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker.

My question is for the Premier. As the Premier knows, New Democrats have made it clear that we want to see results for people in the upcoming budget. One of the issues we’ve raised is the fact that Ontarians’ auto insurance premiums are the highest in Canada and they need to come down. Is the Premier now indicating that she’s prepared to act?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think I’ve been very clear that we want to take action on this issue. More than a year ago, I had a round table in my own riding where we talked about the cost of auto insurance. Through the leadership campaign, particularly in Mississauga and Brampton, I heard concerns about the cost of auto insurance. We are going to take action, and that’s why the Minister of Finance is working with the industry.

I’ve been very clear that the costs of fraud that are in the system need to be taken out, and implementing the recommendations of the anti-fraud task force is very important to me. So I am very willing to take action, and those conversations are happening in the run-up to the budget between the finance minister and the industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats have been very clear that we want to see a 15% reduction, and we want to see the Financial Services Commission of Ontario have a mandate, a real mandate, to get us there over the next year. What steps has the Premier actually taken to achieve this, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think I said what we are doing. We are determined to take action. We are looking for the ways to do that. I think one of the

important ways that we need to do that is to implement the recommendations of the anti-fraud task force. I think there are hundreds of millions of dollars that can come out of the system. What we need to do is make sure that we can tie those reductions to a premium reduction for drivers, Mr. Speaker.

So the principle underlying the question from the leader of the opposition and the principle underlying the opposition day motion is a principle we can agree with: that the reductions in auto insurance need to be put in place. That’s why the Minister of Finance is working with the industry to find the ways of doing that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier forgot to talk about the \$2 billion annually that the insurance industry is gaining from previous decisions that this government has made, while reducing benefits for drivers. Ontarians are paying the highest premiums in Canada, and they’re expecting some real change to make life more affordable.

In the past, the Premier has indicated that a 15% reduction in premiums was going to be too big of a challenge. It’s clear that she’s hearing from the same people we are that life has become completely unaffordable and they actually want to see some real change in their rates.

When will the Premier be contacting FSCO and giving them a mandate to reduce rates by an average of 15% over the coming year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, let me remind the House that it was this side of the government that introduced legislation at the time, in 2004, to reduce insurance premiums, and we did it in a gradual and a concerted effort in dealing with the industry. The NDP know this all too well, because they themselves have recognized that they need to take a gradual approach, recognizing that the impact is very complex. It’s not a direct, proportionate amount of a reduction unless we deal with the fraud and the cost of claims, and that is what we’re addressing.

We’re dealing with the industry. We welcome the input by the third party. We’ll continue to do what we always do on this side of the House, and that’s work in the best interests of the public and ensure that premium rates go down. And I should say this: Premium rates have gone down last year because the efforts that we provided through the task force are taking results. So we will continue to do what’s necessary, and we’ll continue to work with the NDP to make sure it happens.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier as well. We’ve been really clear that in the coming budget we need to see some results and not just conversation. We’ve laid out some very clear and achievable goals that we know people want to see to make life a little more affordable and to ensure the budget is fair.

Is the government still planning to open up a brand new tax loophole for Ontario's biggest corporations so they can get a break on their HST while Ontario families are paying more?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we're doing consultations around the province. In fact, the House should know that we have it on our website, so we're asking everybody out there to come out and provide some input. We welcome the additions that anybody has in respect to what we should do to put forward a very constructive budget that meets the needs of the public.

The issues around tax compliance, tax avoidance, the issue around "What we are going to do to ensure the integrity of our revenue stream?" are critical, and I again applaud the NDP for also bringing that to the forefront, which we addressed with the federal government.

We'll continue to work on those issues, as well as input tax credits, as well as the auto insurance that we've already mentioned and a number of other exemptions that have to be addressed, so that we provide integrity in our revenue stream as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, families in Ontario are feeling extremely squeezed, and the Liberal government is now talking about squeezing them even more. At the same time, this government is opening a new tax loophole so the biggest corporations can get a break on the HST. Can the Premier commit today that she won't be moving ahead with her new tax loophole?

Hon. Charles Sousa: As the member and the leader of the opposition, the third party, recognizes, the federal government's engagement in this issue is critical. That's why we have addressed the matter with them as well. We've called on the feds to work with us. We are taking steps to avoid those tax loopholes. We're also trying to address the underground economy. We're taking the necessary steps to ensure that the strong fundamentals of Ontario continue.

And let me rectify and correct the record that I hear oftentimes from the opposition. Ontario has produced over 600,000 new jobs since the recession—a net number of 400,000. What we're doing is making a difference. We're attracting investment. We've made it a very competitive jurisdiction in Ontario. People are investing in Ontario, companies are investing, and jobs are being created, and that's what matters, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier claims she believes in a balanced approach, but her government is planning to open up new corporate tax loopholes worth over \$1 billion annually. At the same time, they're firing nurses. They're scrambling to build casinos in communities that don't want them, and they're contemplating measures that will add new costs to household budgets.

The Premier says she wants an approach that's balanced and fair. When will we hear her say, "Handing out massive tax breaks to Ontario's wealthiest corporations

isn't something we can afford, and I'm going to stop it"? That's what we'd like to hear her say.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a balanced approach. We are talking about the best way to move forward so that we attract business investment and ensure that we create those jobs.

I find it odd to hear the members opposite talk about growth, and yet it was during their time in power that auto insurance rates went up very high, that the economy had made some suffering. They were the ones that cut nurses and doctors and investments in hospitals and infrastructure.

We have taken a position that we need to invest in the long term. Investments in infrastructure, investments in our services, be it education and our health care—that's what's critical for making us competitive. But we need to afford to do those things, and the way to afford them is to attract those businesses, to create those jobs and create those investments that are going to make us even more competitive. We need to work together, and that is what's a balanced approach.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Given the experience that we've had with Ornge and the number of times that the Minister of Health told us here that the reason that scandal was allowed to brew was because she had no idea what was going on at Ornge, at the last public hearings, we asked Dr. McCallum, the new president and CEO of Ornge, how many times the minister has asked to meet with him to get a handle on what's going on at Ornge. Dr. McCallum said, and I'll quote from Hansard, "I have not met with her." I said, "She has never asked you to meet with her?" Dr. McCallum responded "Not to date."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, the next day, the member from Haldimand—Norfolk asked the same minister if she had met with Dr. McCallum, and she responded—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Frank Klees:—"I have met with Mr. McCallum. In fact, I've seen him earlier this week."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Time's up.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Regrettably, I could not identify the individual saying so, but you will not be using unparliamentary language.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm very happy to tell the member opposite that I did see Dr. McCallum earlier in the week. We met because there were people here from Australia, understanding about what was happening at Ornge. I met Dr. McCallum at an event that was—so it's possible we were both right; that when you

interviewed Dr. McCallum, he had not met with me, but I had met him the other week.

There is constant communication between Ornge and my ministry. I have had conversations with Dr. McCallum. The ministry is very focused on continuing to improve Ornge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: How incredibly disappointing that answer is. It was very specific. The question was: "Did the minister ask you to meet with her to report on what is happening at Ornge, the financial and operational affairs?" Dr. McCallum clearly said, "No; I was never invited to do that. I never met with her." What the minister is doing now is equivocating.

The Premier wants civility in this place. I suggest that a good place to start is to direct her ministers to be forthright and honest when they are asked a question.

I want to ask the minister one more time: Did she or did she not meet with Dr. McCallum to discuss the operational and financial affairs of Ornge, yes or no?

1100

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I have regular communications with the chair of the board, Ian Delaney. Typically the relationship is between the minister and the chair. My ministry is in constant communication with Ornge—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The issue here is, is Ornge back on track? The answer, absolutely, is yes.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Either you've got brilliant timing or terrible timing.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Minister, wrap up.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm finished.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Yesterday, Jamison Steeve, principal secretary to your predecessor, testified at the justice committee that TransCanada came to him because they were concerned that local bylaws in Oakville would prevent the construction of their power plant. It looks like TransCanada came to you looking for a bailout.

Why did the Liberal government move heaven, earth and \$1 billion to make sure TransCanada was happy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. I respect his tenacity on these issues as well, but all three parties made the same commitment to relocate both the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants.

We minimized some costs, Mr. Speaker, by not allowing construction to begin at the proposed Oakville site. The opposition suggests we waited until the middle of the process to relocate the plant. The sunk costs would have been higher had we waited.

As stated in committee yesterday, a number of options were considered at the time to relocate the plant. We have been very clear that the committee is doing its job. It has the opportunity to ask these questions.

The Auditor General is looking into it. He will be able to look into these issues. The Auditor General has the right to interview Mr. Steeve, and he can do that under oath.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Premier, back to you: Jamison Steeve also testified that he was directly involved in talks with TransCanada. He said that he was directed by Chris Morley, Dave Gene and the Premier himself. It's becoming increasingly clear that Ontarians are on the hook for a plant that nobody wanted, that apparently wasn't needed and that couldn't be built.

Why were the Liberal Party leader and his insiders putting Ontarians on the hook and taking TransCanada off the hook?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have mentioned and referred to a memorandum of understanding, which is on the website of the OPA. It was put there September 24 or 25. There are three parties to that agreement. There's TransCanada, the OPA and the government of Ontario. Yes, there were parties from the government involved in those negotiations, but the facts and the numbers that were provided were provided by the OPA.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that Ontarians be provided with all the facts. That's why we've asked the Auditor General to look into this. He will provide a report on both of those gas plant sites and their relocations. We also expanded the terms, the mandate of the committee to enable these things to be examined in further detail. We await the results of all the evidence and all the comments.

We have been straightforward, we have been honest and we have provided all the information.

HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Recently, I have heard concerns from traditional Chinese medicine health professionals about the new regulatory college that will be overseeing their practice. I am concerned that not all Chinese medicine and acupuncture practitioners who serve our communities will be able to be registered as required to continue their practice after April 1, when new rules come into effect bringing oversight to their practice. People throughout Ontario have come to rely on the health professionals who provide important traditional Chinese health care services.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: What changes are taking place and what must health professionals do to continue practising?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. We recognize that many people rely on traditional Chinese medicine. They turn to traditional Chinese medicine; it plays an important part of their health care. We also believe that citizens deserve to know what they are getting and the qualifications of the people from whom they are receiving that service. It's a basic principle of consumer protection, and never more important than when it comes to health care.

That's why I'm very pleased that Ontarians will now have a college to regulate traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture. We brought in legislation in 2006 that makes traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture services safer for Ontarians by ensuring that only regulated and qualified practitioners who are accountable to a regulatory body may deliver those services. They've been working hard developing regulations and policies, including entry practices.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Again, my question is to the Minister of Health. Regulating traditional Chinese medicine makes Ontarians feel safer and makes them feel assured that they are receiving good care. But there are two primary concerns that health professionals have. First, there is a lack of clarity about what happens if the health professional misses the April 1 registration. Second, many health professionals continue to practise in their first language and have concerns about new English- and French-language requirements.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: How is the Transitional Council of the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists addressing these very important concerns?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: After April 1 of this year, there may be applicants who are eligible for the general certificate but who have not yet completed the registration examination requirements. That's why the transitional council is providing a flexible approach to registration for these applicants by issuing provisional certificates to members. Once these members have written and successfully passed the registration exam, they will be issued a general certificate to practise traditional Chinese medicine. Furthermore, we do recognize that there will be issues around language that will need to be taken into account. That's why transitional services are being made available to those who need them in order to complete their testing.

The most important thing that health professionals can do, if they have concerns, is to contact the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists. We must remember that the role of the college is about continually improving patient safety. We need to ensure top quality professionals.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday I told this Legislature that Tiffany Turnbull of the Cabinet Office testified there was

"weekly email traffic" on Project Vapour-lock, the secret code name for the cancellation of the Mississauga power plant. The shock in that, Premier, is the fact that there were absolutely no Project Vapour-lock documents that she swore existed in all the 56,000 pages we received—none that she was referring to. In fact, your own House leader stood up and paraded five Vapour-lock documents, but by doing so, he proved that none of those had the ones that she was saying existed.

Premier, you continue to say that we have all the documents, and we continue to prove that we don't have all the documents. When are you going to quit playing these games and provide all the documents?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I think the member has to be very, very careful with the facts, as he found out yesterday and had to correct the record here this morning.

Mr. Speaker, there were more Project Vapour-lock documents I could have read from yesterday; I didn't have time. I have one here—a memo:

"Project Vapour-lock

"I recommend a similar governance structure to the Vapour transaction as follows:

"1. Government oversight committee (same as Vapour)....

"2. Government technical working group (same as Vapour)....

"3. Relationship between OPA and government is also similar to the Vapour transaction" etc.

Mr. Speaker, he can't stand up in this House and claim that these documents don't exist when in fact they were part of the 56,000.

In terms of the broader question of access to documents, he has some nerve, after he sat at the committee several weeks ago when the government offered to provide a much wider sweep. He, along with other members of the opposition, put their hands up and voted against it.

1110

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm going to ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to take that picture, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm also going to—I've heard the words "respect," "disrespect," "civility," and I'm waiting for it.

I also told the member that I would admonish him, so to the Attorney General and to the Minister of the Environment, don't do it again.

I would now ask the member for his supplementary question.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I have to say to the House leader, thank you for your transparency. We can see right through you. We stand here—you're not fooling anybody with that nonsense, and I'm tired of games. My guest Ishmael is tired of games.

We're here to find out two things. We're here to find out what is the cost of this political cancellation, and who

ordered the documents not to be turned over to this committee. We stand here week after week providing testimony from witnesses under oath. They prove that the Mississauga cancellation was more than \$5 million more than they'll admit, and they swore under oath that the Oakville cancellation is between \$800 million and \$900 million more than they are admitting to.

So I ask the Premier, how much are the political cancellations of the two power plants, and who ordered the documents not to be turned over?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I have tried to let the committee do its work. If the honourable member wants to get into the weeds here on the floor of the House, let's get into it, because he needs to get his facts straight.

The original request from the committee was for documents from the Ontario Power Authority, the Ministry of Energy and the Minister of Energy's office. They were the 56,000 pages that were given to him.

When he raises other documents that might be provided, government members went to the committee and moved a motion to provide them to the opposition, and they sat there, raised their hands and voted against it. If anyone has some explaining to do, it's that member, it's the member for Renfrew-Nipissing and all his caucus colleagues, and why they voted against it and did not allow that motion to proceed.

CASINOS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, community groups all across Ontario, First Nations and the horse racing industry have been vocal opponents of the Liberal government's plan to push casinos on communities, yet the new government, just like the old government, is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay, start the clock.

Finish.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Speaker. The new government, just like the old government, is moving ahead with the OLG privatization despite strong—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean-Carleton is warned.

Go ahead.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: On top of this, there is mass confusion across the province over a municipal hosting formula that results in municipalities being completely in the dark about potential casino revenues.

Will the Premier commit to the people of Ontario that they will have a meaningful say in casino locations—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Oxford, come to order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak:—before they are pushed into communities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There were a lot of things in that question, and there was an interaction between the opposition parties that I'm not sure about.

But here's our position: We have never said that we were going to force or impose a casino on a municipality. We have never said that. We have said the exact opposite. We have said that it is up to municipalities to determine whether or not they want a casino. They have the authority and the power to do the consultation that they deem necessary, and then they will make the decision whether they want a casino or not—not the OLG, not the provincial government, not any individual member, not the Premier. The municipality will decide whether they want a casino or not.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order—second time. Do you want to make it three? I'm going to cut off the coffee in the galleries.

Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, it sounds like the PC members are supportive of the government's plan to privatize or else they wouldn't be trying to shout me down.

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I can assure you, members of the NDP caucus are not supportive of the plan to privatize.

Premier, tomorrow in this Legislature—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know how to do my job, I think. Keep it down.

Finish, please.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Tomorrow in this Legislature, we will debate the NDP motion to give Ontarians a real say before casinos are forced on communities, and to ensure that this government actually sits down—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Lambton, come to order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak:—to talk with the horse racing industry without the threat of a looming March 31—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop. Stop the clock. The two members that I will now speak of are heckling so much and there's so much noise, they didn't even know I asked them to keep quiet, or they totally ignored me. So I'll make sure it's clear: The member from Lambton and the member from Stormont, come to order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Some 30,000 full-time jobs in rural Ontario are on the line, and this government is not even willing to admit that cancelling the SARP partner-

ship without a plan for the future was a mistake that will cost Ontarians dearly.

Will the Premier explain to Ontarians why the Liberal government is choosing to reward the Donald Trumps of the casino industry over jobs in rural Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've made our position on casinos very, very clear. Let me talk about the horse racing industry. We are being guided by the transition panel's report, which called the SARP program bad public policy. It called it unaccountable, un-transparent; it created a fractious industry that lost the focus on its customer.

I think the best evidence that we have got a plan and that we're moving on that plan is that we have nine transition agreements in place with racetracks. Woodbine, Mohawk, Western Fair, Grand River, Clinton, Hanover, Georgian Downs, Flamboro and Fort Erie: All of those racetracks have transition agreements in place.

We are moving towards a sustainable horse racing industry in this province. We are following the plan laid out by the transition panel, and that will mean we will have a transparent, sustainable horse racing industry in Ontario.

SENIORS' SAFETY

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Today, my question is for the hard-working minister responsible for seniors. Over the last six months, since I first had the privilege to represent the wonderful community of Vaughan, I've spent a lot of time in my riding visiting wonderful seniors' clubs like the Maple Pioneer, the Vellore seniors and the Sonoma seniors. Over and over again, I hear from the seniors of my community and from their families that the safety and security of our seniors is definitely a high priority. When our seniors develop dementia, it can make it challenging for their loved ones to ensure that they are safe and protected, especially when they decide to leave home without assistance.

1120

Speaker, through you to the minister: If a loved one with dementia does go missing, what resources are available to help families and caregivers that can help them make sure they are properly prepared?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I have to say thank you to the very effective and hard-working member from Vaughan for the question. It's not only an important question; it's an incredibly important topic as well. We have 180,000 seniors who suffer from one form of dementia or another. During their term of life, they will go missing once, perhaps more, and statistics show that 70% will repeat it time and time again.

Last week, the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat, along with the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, joined forces to launch the Finding Your Way wandering prevention program—the very first program in Canada—in a bold effort to support our loved ones with dementia.

The program recognizes Ontario's diversity, and it will be delivered in eight different languages. When a loved one goes missing, families—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Minister, for that wonderful response and for all of the exceptional work that you're doing on behalf of seniors in my riding of Vaughan and across the wonderful province of Ontario.

I understand that according to the OPP, 75% of individuals who wander are located within less than three kilometres from where they were last seen. Most of them also have a history of wandering.

If a loved one goes missing—I'm asking the minister if he can tell me what we are doing concretely to ensure that our police officers know how to respond to such a call.

Hon. Mario Sergio: The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you to the member from Vaughan for this great question. We have developed resources to train police officers to help families prevent loved ones from going missing. Our officers will also know how to deal with situations where our seniors have already been reported as missing.

That means that we will train front-line police officers to recognize and respond to cases involving seniors who have wandered. To do so, we have provided \$200,000 in annual funding to the Ontario Police College to develop, deliver and evaluate police training on wandering and dementia.

I'm also very proud that the outreach to communities will be conducted in English and in French across the province.

HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, as you will know, the Federation of Ontario Traditional Chinese Medicine Associations has retained a litigation team to seek an injunction against you and your ministry's transitional council. I've met with numerous traditional Chinese medicine practitioners, and they've all raised concerns with me regarding your ministry's and the traditional council's treatment of them. They've advised me that both you and the council have refused to listen to their concerns, that the process leading to the promulgation of these regulations is deeply flawed and will result in unfair and discriminatory requirement terms for practitioners.

Minister, why on earth has it taken a lawsuit to get your attention to this matter?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, quite to the contrary, the transitional council has been working—we passed the legislation in 2006 and appointed the transitional council. They have been working very, very hard to develop the foundation of the college of traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture.

I think people in Ontario have the right to expect that they are receiving care from someone who is qualified, and that is the purpose of the college. They have met

with a wide range of practitioners. They've done very, very difficult work. But I think it's important that the safety of Ontarians is paramount.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: That's the way this ministry continues to operate, same old: Ignore legitimate issues until they blow up in your face. We've seen this time and time again: eHealth, Ornge—the list goes on.

Minister, lawyers, as you know, are gathering in court to deal with this matter as we speak. It should never have come to this. Practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine have raised legitimate concerns about this whole process, including the constitutionality of the regulations, which will affect access to treatment by over one million patients in Ontario.

Minister, will you commit today to meeting with the federation to resolve these concerns?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will let the courts do their work, but what I can tell you is that since January 2011, the transitional council has worked closely with future membership to keep them engaged and to keep them informed about the forthcoming changes. They've provided regular updates on their website and through newsletter and by email. They've clearly communicated requirements and timelines in order to obtain a certificate of registration by April 1, 2013.

The council conducted a series of outreach sessions in February this year to educate practitioners on how to register with the college. The council ran a series of ads in daily newspapers like *Ming Pao* and *Sing Tao* to encourage potential members to submit their applications to college. They've offered requisite courses since November 2012 and have been accepting registration applications since February. To date, over 2,000 applicants have completed the courses.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Eighteen more people have lost their jobs in Windsor, and that's 18 fewer children's aid society caseworkers protecting children in Windsor-Essex and 18 fewer families who can depend on a paycheck to keep a roof over their heads. Windsor is already struggling with high unemployment; the last thing they need is their government to make things even worse. How can cutting jobs at the Windsor children's aid society be good for kids and good for that community?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you very much for the question. Given that it is the Windsor-Essex CAS, I certainly am concerned over the layoffs that are occurring at the local CAS. We have been in touch with that local CAS to discuss that issue as well.

Ultimately, our concern is to ensure the protection of our children and our youth through our CAS, and that is where it is. Staffing decisions are made by agencies based on their volume and based on their need. What I

can say is that we have been working with the CAS, with the Ontario Association of CASs, on a funding model to ensure sustainability in the system with each CAS across the province, not only the one in Windsor. We will continue to do that work with them—again, with our primary objective being our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Windsor's children's aid society workers do a job that is stressful and that is emotionally draining. They're already overworked and underfunded, and now they have to deal with demoralizing staffing cuts. Eighteen workers have just lost their jobs, and their colleagues are now shouldering even bigger caseloads. Is this how the government shows concern and makes sure that no child is left behind in Windsor?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Speaker, I'm going to echo the comments that she just made with respect to the work that is done in our communities on behalf of our children by the workers at the CAS. I worked in our community. I worked very closely with the CAS, with our families, so absolutely, they do a fine job, and I know exactly the work that they do down in our communities.

What I will say is that over the past number of years, this government has increased funding to the CASs throughout the province by 40%. It is funded at \$1.5 billion. The CAS in Windsor has also received increases of close to 30% over the years. So we are certainly working with our CASs. We are certain ensuring the sustainability of that system and ensuring the protection and safety of our children.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is to the Premier in her role as the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Minister, there are many groups in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan that are interested in, and excited about, the introduction of our local food bill. The Thunder Bay Food Action Network and the Thunder Bay Federation of Agriculture, as well as others, have been working towards highlighting and supporting the benefits of local food for some time now.

In Thunder Bay, food is often transported long distances, with obvious environmental impacts. More consumption of local food is better for our health and supportive of our local agricultural community and our economy.

Minister, can you tell this House what this bill will do, in addition to previous initiatives like the Greenbelt Fund, to support the efforts of the Thunder Bay Federation of Agriculture, the Food Action Network, and organizations like them right across Ontario?

1130

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you to the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan for the question, and to his community for the work that is being done to promote local food.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The hard work.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's right, the hard work that's being done. That's right.

We want residents of Ontario to be able to access local food, to eat it at home, in restaurants, at work, in schools or wherever they are. We want to take ideas like what's going on in Thunder Bay–Atikokan and we want to be able to spread those across the province. We want to support those ideas and we want to support communities in that kind of innovation. So, if passed, the local food bill will do just that: It will support, it will promote and it will celebrate the good things that are grown in Ontario, the good projects that are going on around the province. Food production in Ontario is a significant industry that drives the economy and many good jobs—over 700,000 good jobs in the agri-food industry. It's an extremely important industry in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the Premier in her role as the Minister of Agriculture and Food for that answer. It's important for the people in Ontario and in Thunder Bay–Atikokan to know that our commitment to local food still remains very strong.

The last time this bill was introduced, the industry had feedback about how the legislation could be strengthened and were vocal about the changes that they wished to see in the bill. For example, there was concern around ensuring that consultation on the goals contained in the legislation was robust on the part of our government.

Speaker, through you to the minister: With this opportunity to reintroduce the local food bill, were any changes made?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Absolutely. What we did was we consulted with the industry, we consulted with producers and municipal partners, and their feedback helped to shape the changes in the bill—helped shape the changes in the bill and also some of the non-legislative changes that we proposed, some of those goals that aren't necessarily in the legislation but are part of the larger local food strategy.

I know my critic from the Progressive Conservatives supports the notion that we would consult with stakeholders on the kinds of targets that we would put in place, because I know he doesn't want our municipalities to be burdened with targets and objectives that they can't actually manage. We've worked with the stakeholders. We have a local food strategy in place.

We've stipulated that the ministry publish a summary of government local food initiatives at least every three years, so we've put the burden on the government and on the minister to produce that report and to make sure that we work with the sector across the province. The report will highlight the successes and the innovations across the broader public sector and within municipalities.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Minister, as you know, your colleague the Minister of the Environment has approved exorbitant fee hikes charged by the Ontario Tire Stewardship. Starting April 1, the fees are increasing from between 400% and 1000%, minimum. I would suggest that this is a careless and rushed decision, as it negatively impacts farmers and small business, drives sales out of Ontario and into Quebec and the United States, increases food costs, and ultimately results in more job losses and decreased tax revenues.

Minister, was this a unilateral decision by your fellow ministers of economic development, rural affairs, and transportation, or did the environment minister act alone? Please clarify if they actually supported it. Most importantly, how, as the self-acclaimed learning-on-the-job minister of ag and food, have you allowed this decision to be made knowing it will so severely and negatively impact the farming community, the community you are supposed to represent?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm going to take the first one, Mr. Speaker, and the Minister of the Environment is going to speak to the details.

I want to address two things—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Nice, deep breath.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton is not helping.

Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to address two points, and then I know the Minister of the Environment is going to want to speak to the details.

The first one is the accusation that I'm a learning-on-the-job minister, a learning-on-the-job Premier. I'm never going to apologize for learning more about this province, ever.

When I met with the corn-fed beef folks yesterday and when I was at the chicken farmers' AGM this morning, they were thrilled that agriculture and food is getting the profile it's getting. That's the first point.

The second point is that this issue around the tire stewardship has been raised with me. I raised it with the Minister of the Environment and I know that he has some details that he would like to share with the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker. This time, my question is to the Premier. Premier, would you discuss this matter with the ag minister and seek an apology to the farm industry and small businesses?

These increases will cost our farmers in the agricultural industry tens of millions of dollars. A single large tractor is going up by \$300. Tires for a quad train spreader will increase by \$1,340. It saddens me to advise that an implement dealer in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has already lost one major sale and is having to absorb the increases on three other tractors at the cost of \$700 per tractor—unacceptable.

Premier, are you absolutely certain that your fee hikes are not harming the already struggling farm, contracting

and small business industries in Ontario, decreasing tax revenues and making Ontario businesses less competitive and causing job losses? May I suggest that your idea of performing the dual role of ag minister and Premier is not—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I know the member would be aware that Ontario Tire Stewardship, which was established under the legislation of the previous Conservative government, in fact is a business organization that makes business decisions at arm's length of government; so I know the member at the end of the question period will want to correct his record, and know that the government of Ontario gets none of this money. The government of Ontario does not impose these fees. It's done by private sector—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I understand that there are votes coming up.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Having said that, I have had a meeting with Ontario Tire Stewardship officials and have discussed this matter with them at the behest of the Minister of Agriculture, and they have agreed to go back and consult even more with the agricultural community to try to establish whether or not changes can be made and, if they can, how they can be as fair as possible to members of the farming community. I commend—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH PROFESSIONS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

As of Monday, traditional Chinese medicine will be regulated in Ontario. What should have been good news for the 2,000 practitioners who have thousands of hours of practice is turning into a nightmare. Did you know that as of today, not a single one of them has a licence to practise, but yet it's due on Monday? The website to register is unmanageable—mostly in English—and now they're being told that the Chinese document won't be available till September.

Does the minister think it's right that the traditional Chinese medicine practitioners are told that they need a licence as of Monday, but the Chinese material won't be available till September?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm happy to see there's such interest in this issue today, Speaker, and let me repeat what I said before: The transitional council is providing a flexible approach to registration for those applicants who have registered, but have not yet completed the requirements. They will be provided with a transitional certificate, they will be able to continue to practise, but they must first register with the college so

that the college knows that they are preparing to write those exams.

Speaker, this work is important. It is under way because we believe that it's important to protect Ontarians. It's important that when they receive acupuncture or services from a traditional Chinese medicine practitioner, they get them from a qualified practitioner.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Mr. Speaker, do you really think it's right that the Chinese material won't be available till September, yet you have to register as of Monday? We are on Wednesday, one day before the long weekend of Easter, and not one of them has a licence to practise, and they're supposed to have those licences on Monday.

This makes no sense. It should have been something good; it's turning into a nightmare. Traditional Chinese medicine has been around for 4,000 years, yet the government does not seem to be able to have Chinese material line up with the date where we start to regulate them. Minister, how does this make any sense?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, this is very good news. In fact, it was the unanimous approval of the Legislature on a unanimous vote to form the college of traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture. As I said earlier, over 2,000 applicants have completed their courses. This work is under way. People are registering. They're getting their provisional certificate. They will be able to continue business as usual as they complete their requirements to practise. This is a transitional process, and it's very good news for the people of this province.

DEFERRED VOTES

SUPPLY ACT, 2013

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2013

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013 / Projet de loi 33, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1141 to 1146.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On March 26, Mr. Milloy moved second reading of Bill 33.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.

Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric

Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael

Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Craiton, Kim
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad

Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Paul

Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhhar, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Craiton, Kim
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad

Ayes
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Paul

Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Pruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhhar, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 67; the nays are 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried. The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

Second reading agreed to.

SUPPLY ACT, 2013

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2013

Mr. Sousa moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013 /
Projet de loi 33, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Sousa has moved third reading of Bill 33. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no; therefore, all those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh. I skipped a move.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

I therefore say that the ayes have it.

Five members?

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute vote. Same vote? No.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed to the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 67; the nays are 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and is entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

On February 20, 2013, Ms. Wong moved, seconded by Mr. McNeely, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

“To the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

“We, Her Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us.”

All those in favour of Ms. Wong’s motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
 Armstrong, Teresa J.
 Balkissoon, Bas
 Bartolucci, Rick
 Berardinetti, Lorenzo
 Bisson, Gilles
 Bradley, James J.
 Broten, Laurel C.
 Campbell, Sarah
 Cansfield, Donna H.
 Chan, Michael
 Chiarelli, Bob
 Colle, Mike
 Coteau, Michael
 Crack, Grant
 Craltor, Kim
 Damerla, Dipika
 Del Duca, Steven
 Delaney, Bob
 Dhillon, Vic
 Dickson, Joe
 DiNovo, Cheri
 Duguid, Brad

Fife, Catherine
 Flynn, Kevin Daniel
 Forster, Cindy
 Gerretsen, John
 Gélinas, France
 Gravelle, Michael
 Horwath, Andrea
 Hoskins, Eric
 Jaczek, Helena
 Jeffrey, Linda
 Kwinter, Monte
 Leal, Jeff
 MacCharles, Tracy
 Mangat, Amrit
 Mantha, Michael
 Marchese, Rosario
 Matthews, Deborah
 Mauro, Bill
 McGuinity, Dalton
 McMeekin, Ted
 McNeely, Phil
 Meilleur, Madeleine
 Miller, Paul

Milloy, John
 Moridi, Reza
 Murray, Glen R.
 Naqvi, Yasir
 Natyshak, Taras
 Oraziotti, David
 Piruzza, Teresa
 Prue, Michael
 Qaadir, Shafiq
 Sandals, Liz
 Schein, Jonah
 Sergio, Mario
 Singh, Jagmeet
 Sousa, Charles
 Tabuns, Peter
 Takhar, Harinder S.
 Taylor, Monique
 Vanthof, John
 Wong, Soo
 Wynne, Kathleen O.
 Zimmer, David

respect to the finality of certain municipal planning decisions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Klees seeks unanimous consent to withdraw. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have some nice visitors in the gallery with me today. It's a family from Nickel Belt: Mr. Neil Haskett; his wife, Tabatha Haskett, who is the daughter of a good friend of mine; and their children Clarice, Aedan, Natalia and William. Please welcome them to Queen's Park. They're here to support my colleague from Hamilton.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Also, I'd better identify the member from Hamilton Mountain to introduce some guests.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would also like to welcome some guests. We have Kenneth Reid, Bobbie Gellner, Chris York, Pat Hudak, Kim Shook, Zane Sherwood and Angela Sherwood. Many folks, again, along with the Haskett family, are here to support the reading of my bill today. Thank you, and welcome once again to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed to the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
 Bailey, Robert
 Barrett, Toby
 Chudleigh, Ted
 Clark, Steve
 Dunlop, Garfield
 Elliott, Christine
 Fedeli, Victor
 Hardeman, Ernie
 Harris, Michael
 Hillier, Randy
 Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
 Jones, Sylvia
 Klees, Frank
 Leone, Rob
 MacLaren, Jack
 MacLeod, Lisa
 McDonell, Jim
 McKenna, Jane
 McNaughton, Monte
 Miller, Norm
 Milligan, Rob E.
 Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
 O'Toole, John
 Ouellette, Jerry J.
 Pettapiece, Randy
 Scott, Laurie
 Shurman, Peter
 Smith, Todd
 Thompson, Lisa M.
 Walker, Bill
 Wilson, Jim
 Yakabuski, John
 Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 67; the nays are 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is therefore resolved that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us."

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1200 to 1500.

WITHDRAWAL OF BILL 35

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Newmarket–Aurora on a point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: I seek unanimous consent to discharge the order for second reading and withdraw Bill 35, An Act to amend the Places to Grow Act, 2005 with

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**HOSPITAL FUNDING**

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: In the 2011-12 fiscal year, 33,142 citizens visited the Trenton Memorial Hospital ER. That number is estimated to grow to 40,000 in 2013-14. I feel a personal and professional responsibility to ensure Trenton Memorial has the best services in place to provide my constituents the health care they deserve.

Trenton Memorial is literally a vital lifeline within the community. The current funding formula that this government has put in place bases hospital funding on services delivered, but does not take into consideration the demographics of the community that the hospital serves. Northumberland–Quinte West has one of the largest aging populations in the province. The complexity of seniors' care isn't properly reflected in hospital funding.

Recently, Quinte Health Care announced, under the directive of the South East LHIN, that \$10 million would be cut from this year's operating budget. On Monday afternoon, I had the pleasure of meeting with the members of the Trenton Memorial Hospital Foundation, physicians and military personnel from CFB Trenton. Each attendee voiced their support for Trenton Memorial and voiced their concerns that the proposed service cuts and closure of the laboratory would place increased pressure on front-line workers and have negative implications on patient care, not only in Trenton, but also in Belleville.

I urge the Minister of Health to reconsider not only the size of the funding cuts but to take into consideration the vital importance the hospital's lab plays in service delivery and patient care.

AUTISM

Miss Monique Taylor: Next Tuesday, April 2, is World Autism Awareness Day. The prevalence of autism spectrum disorder grows every year; the most recent statistics put the rate in Canada at one in 94. There are approximately 100,000 people in Ontario with ASD.

Autism is a lifelong disability, but proper treatment can make productive and fulfilling lives a reality, especially if it starts at an early age. Unfortunately, we have 1,700 people on the waiting list for IBI treatment, and the problems continue throughout their lives. Individuals and families face long wait-lists and unsupported transitions from Special Services at Home to Passport funding. We simply don't have enough services, and it's left to families to do the heavy lifting—a weight that would crush most of us—sleepless nights, constant round-the-clock care, and oftentimes suffering violent attacks from those they love and who, in turn, love them.

In reality, those families are left to subsidize our care system to the tune of billions of dollars every year, because they simply have no other choice.

In closing, I would like to congratulate Autism Ontario, which, this year, celebrates 40 years of providing advocacy and support to individuals and families living with autism spectrum disorder.

HOLI FESTIVAL

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Today I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature to recognize an important Hindu festival. It's called Holi, although not necessarily with the same meaning that the English word "holy" would have.

Many of you, I know, are quite familiar with a few Indian festivals. Perhaps you've heard of Diwali quite a bit or Vaisakhi. Holi is also a very important festival, especially if you live in India, because it marks spring. It does have some religious significance—it's essentially a social festival.

Imagine for a minute—it's a warmer country, of course—hundreds of thousands of children in the streets, in backyards playing with colour. That's what Holi is: Holi is the festival of colours. We celebrate the coming of spring in India by painting each other's faces with colour. Just try to imagine for a minute what that looks like. It's essentially about friends and family coming together, but more importantly it's about strangers coming together as well. Imagine for a minute neighbours who are shy and don't talk to each other, but on Holi they all come out together to play with colour.

An interesting part of Holi which I remember, as a child, is we also played with water. Of course, that would not be possible here because March is still too cold, but playing with water is a very, very attractive feature for the younger children.

So it's really a riot of colour—wet colour, dry colour—but essentially it's bringing back spring, bringing back colour to our lives.

LIFE OF PI

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a real pleasure today to rise in the House to pay tribute to a distinguished actor in my riding of Durham—an actor who appeared in the Oscar-winning movie *Life of Pi*. Jonas, a Bengal tiger from Bowmanville Zoo, was amongst a number of animal performers chosen to perform the role of the tiger in the movie.

Members may be aware that *Life of Pi* is based on the fantasy novel by Canadian author Yann Martel. The movie was directed by Ang Lee and won Oscars for Best Picture, Cinematography, Original Score and Visual Effects.

Bowmanville's connection to this movie demonstrates the potential for co-operation between cultural industries in North America and Taiwan, where most of the scenes from *Life of Pi* were actually shot.

Recently, on March 25, it was my distinct pleasure to meet with Winston Chen, director general, and Justin Lee, director, of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office. I'd like to thank them for their visit and for inviting me to a special screening of the movie *Life of Pi*.

Bowmanville Zoo director Michael Hackenberger and his wife and staff report that Jonas, the tiger who appeared in *Life of Pi*, has, sadly, passed away since the movie was filmed. His talent lives on in a motion picture that was made possible through the collaboration of cultural industries around the world, under the leadership of the film industry of Taiwan itself.

I am proud of Bowmanville's connection to the film and the innovation it takes to make art happen. Movie fans will remember *Life of Pi*, and friends of the Bowmanville Zoo will fondly remember the life of Jonas.

It's my pleasure to present this statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I was going to ask the member to get me a paw print for an autograph, but it won't be possible now.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. John Vanthof: The deadline is rapidly approaching to launch an appeal for the MPAC valuation of your property. Homeowners have tools to self-assess their properties, but industrial sites are much harder to compare and rate. Large, successful appeals in industrial properties can play havoc in single-industry towns.

This is happening all over the province, and the latest victim is the township of James. The mill in Elk Lake appealed their MPAC assessment, as is their right. The council decided to fight this appeal. They had faith in the original assessment and in the repeated assurances that MPAC would stand by it.

One of the tools that MPAC uses to rate industrial properties is the market adjustment factor. Back in January 2010, MPAC agreed to provide the rationale by which the MAF is calculated, but the study, folks, had disappeared.

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Last week at the arbitration hearing in Elk Lake, MPAC appeared to be backing down from its original

assessment. Then, in the final stages of the hearing, after more than three years, the missing study was found. Despite protests from Elk Lake, it was included as evidence. The municipality withdrew from the hearing and the arbitration review board ruled in the mill's favour, in effect bankrupting the municipality.

Had MPAC produced the study three years ago, when it was requested, Elk Lake could have made decisions based on the study and not on the fleeting assurances of MPAC officials.

I'm calling on the Premier to direct the ARB to put a hold on this decision and order MPAC to justify its actions.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Phil McNeely: Ontarians received good news about jobs in February with the employment report. Employment rose by 35,000 jobs in Ontario, and, better yet, this included almost 21,000 new jobs for our province's youth. In total, Ontario's job growth accounted for nearly 70% of Canada's total new jobs.

However, statistics for my hometown of Ottawa were not so rosy. Largely because of the federal public service cutbacks, our region shed 2,100 jobs last month. Even more specifically, in my riding of Ottawa—Orléans, the harm of these job losses is further compounded by the plan to move the offices of National Defence from the downtown to the west end of the city. Because of our proximity to downtown—20 minutes away by public transit—Orléans has been the home of Canadian Forces families. The numbers were so great, people commonly referred to Orléans as CFB Orléans.

These federal decisions to take away the access to jobs in my community will have lasting repercussions on multiple fronts. Locally and throughout the city, we can expect increased property taxes, skewed property values and a loss of cultural identity as people are forced to move from their communities for their work.

While Ontario continues to punch above its economic weight, our former colleague and now regional minister John Baird continues to make it difficult for Orléans residents to participate in our province's good fortune.

The federal government has a special responsibility to protect our national capital. I call on our federal counterparts to take a balanced look at Ottawa's development with sustainability in mind and with consideration for the social and economic impacts of their decisions.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to speak about an issue that will have an impact in my riding: the increase of tire stewardship fees for farmers. Agricultural tires have been put into the same category as hard off-road tires, even though agricultural tires take about half the time to process as these other types, and they are not replaced as often.

I have been told by an agricultural tire dealer in my riding that he will no longer be stocking new tires as a result of this fee. This means that if a farmer blows a tire in the middle of a field, they will not be able to get a quick replacement. This will obviously have a detrimental effect on the agricultural industry.

If farmers want to avoid this fee—and this is the sad reality—they could bring tires into Ontario from Quebec and not pay this fee. There, I understand that the Ontario Tire Stewardship has no enforcement mechanism to prevent this. So we're driving an underground economy here. For example, if you need two new tires for a combine, it will be almost \$1,000 cheaper to pick them up in Quebec.

The Premier and agriculture minister talks about how important the agri-food industry is and how much money they contribute to the economy. Proposing to increase the tire stewardship fee by 400% to 1,000% will drive sales out of Ontario and into Quebec and the United States. This undoubtedly will have a negative impact across the province.

DIALYSIS

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm extremely pleased to share some great news in my riding of Niagara Falls, as a long-time advocate for a stand-alone satellite centre for dialysis. Even when individuals in my community thought that something like this could never happen, it has happened. As our population ages, kidney disease is becoming more and more prevalent. So by providing more than 17,000 treatments a year in this new stand-alone dialysis centre, it will help many by making dialysis more accessible and thereby improving each patient's quality of life.

Beginning on March 4, the 18,000-square-foot centre with 18 dialysis units was opened seven days a week, 6:30 to 8:30, with free parking on-site. On an annual basis, approximately 108 patients will be treated by 25 dedicated team members, plus staff who work between the different locations.

I want to thank the Ministry of Health and the Niagara Health System, who shared my vision of a stand-alone dialysis centre by providing over \$4 million in capital funding and a yearly operating cost of \$3 million a year. I have the pleasure of stopping in on many occasions, meeting with the patients while they are having their dialysis treatment and hearing the kind words they are saying and the benefits that they are receiving from this.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Lake Nipissing stakeholders are beside themselves after recent discussions with the Ministry of Natural Resources, who reduced the daily catch limits for walleye from four down to two.

Despite being presented with scientific evidence in support of a significant restocking effort, the minister has decided to maintain the status quo. Even though the stakeholders have stated that they view restocking as one

of the solutions, they have slammed the door on them, and their livelihoods in the process.

The municipality of Callander passed a resolution in January that asks the government to reconsider the daily catch limit decision and asks that “the Ministry of Natural Resources increase the support for, and provide additional resources dedicated towards, alternative actions to address the decline in the walleye population, including but not limited to additional fishing opportunities for other species, consistent enforcement of regulations and daily catch limits and community-based restocking programs.”

The Lake Nipissing stakeholders are ready to move forward with restocking initiatives they fund and perform completely on their own. We are asking the government, why are they standing in the way instead of working with our fishers on solutions going forward?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PRESERVING EXISTING COMMUNITIES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À PRÉSERVER LES COLLECTIVITÉS EXISTANTES

Mr. Klees moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to amend the Places to Grow Act, 2005 with respect to the finality of certain municipal planning decisions / Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur les zones de croissance en ce qui concerne le caractère définitif de certaines décisions prises au niveau municipal en matière d'aménagement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Frank Klees: By way of clarification, you'll know that I repealed a bill earlier today that was essentially the same bill. However, it was important for me to make some amendments to that bill to ensure that it was focused very specifically on established, stable residential communities and also to ensure that there was a provision in the bill that municipalities can demonstrate that they are meeting both the population targets and intensification targets of the Places to Grow Act.

OMBUDSMAN AMENDMENT ACT (CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'OMBUDSMAN (SOCIÉTÉS D'AIDE À L'ENFANCE)

Miss Taylor moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to amend the Ombudsman Act with respect to children's aid societies / Projet de loi 42, Loi

modifiant la Loi sur l'ombudsman en ce qui a trait aux sociétés d'aide à l'enfance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been repeated calls from several quarters for Ontario to come into line with the rest of Canada and allow the Ombudsman to have oversight of child protection services. This bill amends the Ombudsman Act to allow the Ombudsman to investigate any decision or recommendation made or any act done or omitted in the course of the administration of the children's aid society.

MINING AMENDMENT ACT (RESOURCES PROCESSED IN ONTARIO), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MINES (RESSOURCES TRANSFORMÉES EN ONTARIO)

Mr. Mantha moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to amend the Mining Act to require resources to be processed in Ontario / Projet de loi 43, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines afin d'exiger que les ressources soient transformées en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The bill amends the Mining Act, which currently provides that all ores and minerals raised or removed from lands, claims or mining rights that are patented, leased or otherwise disposed of must be treated and refined in Canada. The amendment of subsection 91(1) changes this by providing that all such ores or minerals must be treated or refined in Ontario.

Le projet de loi modifie la Loi sur les mines, laquelle prévoit actuellement que les minerais et minéraux qui sont tirés ou extraits d'un terrain, d'un claim ou d'un droit minier qui sont aliénés, notamment par lettres patentes ou par bail, soient traités et raffinés au Canada.

La modification apportée au paragraphe 91(1) prévoit que de tels minerais et minéraux doivent être traités et raffinés en Ontario.

Speaker, not only do we have large deposits in Ontario; we also have the facilities and the skills to process those minerals right here in Ontario. This is an opportunity that we cannot let go by and that can bring good jobs to Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll change it up a little bit by introducing just a generic comment again.

When introducing bills, it is the pleasure of this place to read the explanatory note, and if the note is long, that you condense it—no other speeches, because you'll have time to speak to that when you introduce the bill for second reading. I appreciate all members' co-operation in that.

I think I'll change it up for petitions as well: the member from Durham.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: It's certainly nice to be recognized once in a while.

"Whereas, under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08, public health inspectors are required to undertake risk assessments of small drinking water systems;

"Whereas many of these small drinking water systems are located in" rural "homes operating bed and breakfasts in rural Ontario;

"Whereas private homes that are the sites of bed and breakfasts already have potable drinking water used by the homeowners and their families every day;

"Whereas many of these bed and breakfasts have established the quality of their drinking water" for their families "through years of regular testing;

"Whereas these home-based businesses are facing high costs"—and regulation—"to comply with the new requirements of regulation 319/08;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health amend Ontario regulation 319/08"—this is important—"to give the testing track record of a small drinking water system greater weight in the risk assessment process;

"Furthermore we, the undersigned, ask that bed and breakfasts operated within a private home with a drinking water supply meeting all the requirements of a private home not be subject to regulation 319/08."

It just makes sense. I'm pleased to sign and endorse this on behalf of my constituents and give it to Magalie.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the"—up to—"400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

We've already delivered thousands, and here's another 700. I'm going to sign it because I believe in it, and I'm going to give it to Nadim to be delivered.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Agincourt is historically recognized as north Scarborough's oldest and most well-established community; and

"Whereas the residents of the community of Scarborough—Agincourt share unique interests; and

"Whereas historically Agincourt's electoral voice has always been found in an electoral district north of Ontario Highway 401; and

"Whereas communities, such as Scarborough—Agincourt, with historical significance should be protected and not divided; and

"Whereas the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has recently released proposals to redraw the federal riding map of Scarborough—Agincourt; and

"Whereas 'community of interest' is a mandated consideration of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act; and

"Whereas the original proposal from the commission included a unified Scarborough—Agincourt riding; and

"Whereas the commission's report would inexplicably divide the Scarborough—Agincourt community; and

"Whereas the residents of Scarborough—Agincourt should not be divided and the electoral riding should remain, in its entirety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call upon the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario to recognize the historical and demographic context of the Scarborough—Agincourt community and to preserve riding boundaries that include a protected Scarborough—Agincourt community north of Ontario Highway 401."

I support this petition and I will give it to Stone the page.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and the quality of life for all future generations;

"Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which will have significant human and financial costs;

"Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

"Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in the headwaters of multiple highly vulnerable aquifers is detrimental;

"Whereas the county of Oxford has passed a resolution requesting a moratorium on landfill construction or approval;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To implement a moratorium in Oxford county on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

"That this review of alternatives would give special emphasis on (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can efficiently and practically be recycled or reused so as not to require disposal in landfills."

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by a great many of my friends and neighbours, and I affix my signature to it and thank you very much for the time to present it.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

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"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask our page Arveen to bring it to the Clerk.

CHILDREN'S PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there has been a dramatic increase in the use of psychiatric medication on children especially children in care or provincial custody; and

"Whereas it's an established scientific fact that psychiatric drugs cause shrinkage and related problems to with the development of the still-developing brain; and

"Whereas it is our responsibility as a society to protect and care for our children;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To create a policy statement discouraging the use of psychiatric drugs on children and send it to all Ontario clinics and mental health facilities working with children;

"To actively monitor the rate of use of psychiatric drugs on children to ensure that it is going down;

"To amend the professional misconduct regulation under the Medicine Act so that prescribing medication to children where the use of such medication has not been specifically approved by Health Canada for their age group and purpose constitutes professional misconduct, also to alter OHIP practices such that such use is not covered."

I affix my signature in full support.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed

diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

I agree with this petition. I affix my name to it and I'll send it to the desk with Stone.

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm catching up on my older petitions pre-prorogation.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the announced closure of nine provincial parks in northern Ontario will have a negative impact on local tourism and businesses; and

“Whereas these closures were announced without first consulting with local municipalities, residents or stakeholders; and

“Whereas no alternatives for keeping the parks open were explored;

“We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to consult with interested municipalities to determine if the management of the parks can be outsourced to them as a means of keeping them open, while eliminating the financial obligation to the province.”

I agree with this petition and sign my name and give it to Magalie.

CONDOMINIUM CORPORATION

Mr. Grant Crack: It's a pleasure for me to introduce this petition on behalf of my colleague the honourable minister responsible for seniors, the MPP for York West.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the residents of York Condominium Corporation 375, request the direct action of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in reviewing the records and practices of this condominium corporation;

“Whereas the condominium corporation has failed to uphold and act upon the conditions and bylaws outlined under the constitution of the condominium;

“Whereas the condominium corporation has failed to hold an annual general meeting in the last three years to address the concerns of the homeowners;

“Whereas the condominium corporation has failed to uphold both the aesthetics and the maintenance of the property;

“Whereas the company Blue Star, hired by York Condominium Corporation 375 to maintain the property has failed to carry out its responsibilities and address the requests made by residents;

“Whereas the York Condominium Corporation 375 has allowed selected units to fall behind in maintenance fees without enforcing the penalties outlined in the constitution of the condominium;

“Whereas the members of the condominium board have failed to enforce the bylaws of the condominium corporation when addressing the concerns of residents, holding legitimate board elections and reporting financials and other information to the homeowners;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, request through this petition that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario take the

necessary steps to investigate the actions of the York Condominium Corporation 375. Furthermore, we request that an immediate review of the Condominium Act be conducted by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in order to strengthen the condominium bylaws by imposing severe and stringent penalties on members of the board, management companies, accountants and other responsible individuals that fail to aid, abide by and uphold the bylaws of the corporation, and fail to act in the best interests of all condominium owners.”

I support this petition on behalf of my colleague and will affix my signature and give it to page Ellen.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Cindy Forster: A petition “Re: Dr. Kevin Smith's Niagara Health System report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care proposed changes to the hospital services in south Niagara.

“Whereas the residents of south Niagara will not have equal, fair, safe and timely access to in-patient gynecological, obstetrical and pediatric services due to distance; and

“Whereas excessive travel times and lack of public transportation for residents in south Niagara will put patient safety at risk; and

“Whereas if implemented, Dr. Smith's recommendations and the proposed location of a new south Niagara hospital in Niagara Falls is approved, a two-tier health system in Niagara will be created, where north Niagara will be overserviced and south Niagara will be underserviced in relation to the safe and timely access to health and hospital care; and

“Whereas if hospital services including in-patient gynecological and mental health, and all obstetrical and pediatric services from the Welland hospital site and the Greater Niagara hospital site will be relocated to the new north Niagara St. Catharines site in 2013, it will undermine the continued viability of these two sites as full-service hospital sites;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to maintain existing services at the Welland hospital site and the Niagara Falls hospital site and that no services are to be moved until this new south Niagara hospital is open and request that any approval for a new Niagara south hospital include a site that is centrally located in Welland.”

I support this petition and will affix my signature and send it with Fae to the Clerk.

OPPOSITION DAY

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of

Ontario calls upon the Wynne government to direct FSCO to gradually reduce average, industry-wide, private passenger auto insurance premiums by 15%.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before we move on, I'll just remind guests that they cannot clap or cheer or anything. Only the members in the House can do that.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timmins—James Bay, please.

Mr. Singh has moved opposition day number 2.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify: This is a demand, a request to reduce auto insurance rates across Ontario by 15%. This is something we're calling on the government to do within 12 months. This is a demand that is both reasonable and something that is deserved.

If we look at the situation in Ontario, in 2010 changes to the statutory benefits that we receive as consumers resulted in a significant cost reduction for the auto insurance industry. In fact, this has resulted in a \$2-billion saving for the auto insurance industry annually. To date, that results in over \$4 billion of savings, but in the same time period, we've seen auto insurance premiums go up by 5%. That's simply unacceptable. So what we're asking the government to do today—what we're asking the House to do today—is to accept our motion to see FSCO mandate a 15% reduction within the next 12 months. That is what we require. That is what we need.

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When doing this, we ask the government to keep in mind the fact that this government made significant changes to the auto insurance regime which benefited the insurance industry but did not benefit drivers in Ontario. There is no tie-in. The proposition was that by reducing the costs incurred by the insurance industry, this would result in lower premiums. But we haven't seen those lower premiums. In fact, if you look at the facts before us, the combined loss ratio for the industry, which is a commonly used method of assessing the industry profits for the insurance companies, these show—and this is using their own facts and figures—that the industry is making some of the highest profits over a decade. These are some of the highest profits, historically, that we are seeing now in Ontario.

At the same time, the Auditor General made it very clear in his report in 2011 that the 12% return-on-equity rule that governs the industry is something that needs to be called into question, that is not in keeping with the times. It was set at a time when interest rates were completely different, were much higher, when a bond would get you a much higher return than it can give you today. That is something that needs to be addressed. The Auditor General required and requested that the government look into that; the government indicated that they would and that that report would be released at the beginning of 2013. We still have not seen that report that would

address this issue of return on equity. We need to see that report, because that will help us unlock the problem, to address this issue and to reduce auto insurance rates.

Mr. Speaker, we're looking at a time when people are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. There are significant struggles people are facing in their household budgets. People are having to make do with less. They have less and less disposable income, and one of the hardest-hitting costs in their lives is auto insurance. The reality is that many people do not have access to affordable, efficient—or any—public transit. As a result, those community members must rely on their vehicle to get to work, to take their family members to a hospital if there is any need for that, to pick up their children from school. It's not a luxury; it's a necessity for many Ontarians. Recognizing that it's a necessity, we need to recognize that while auto insurance is compulsory in this province, making it affordable should also be compulsory. That is something we need to see. If we require our citizens and the people of Ontario to have auto insurance, we should also ensure that that auto insurance is affordable. We have a mechanism before us. We see that there are significant profits in the insurance industry, we see that there are significant cost reductions; now let's see some significant premium reductions for people in Ontario.

Whenever this issue is broached, whenever we talk about auto insurance rates, the immediate response that people have—it's a knee-jerk reaction: "Oh, it's because of fraud. We need to address fraud." Let's make our position very clear. Of course we, the NDP, are supportive of measures that would reduce fraud. That is something that everyone supports. But—there is a strong "but" here—there are two major issues here. One, any implementation of the fraud task force—any implementation that we do to reduce fraud should be tied to some premium reductions. We know that if we do tackle some additional fraud, that should be tied to some guarantees in reducing premiums. And we're saying very, very clearly that the industry has enjoyed some of the highest profits in the history of Ontario, some of the most significant historic reductions in their costs, and these reductions go much further than fraud would have by itself. I want to repeat that: If the Liberal government had done all it could to tackle fraud, it would not have resulted in the significant savings that the industry is enjoying right now. By reducing the benefits that consumers receive, they saved the industry far more than fraud could ever have done alone. So with those significant savings, we're saying that there are savings in the system right now that should be transferred on to consumers. That is our simple request: that those significant cost reductions should flow to consumers, because that was the initial intention.

In 2010, as many of the members who are in this House know, when the Minister of Finance at that time indicated that there were going to be some changes to the insurance regime, the proposal, the rationale for that was, "If we bring down costs, we'll bring down premiums."

Well, they certainly didn't bring down the costs—the costs have come down, but our premiums have gone up instead of going down.

This is a time for action. We want to see this in the budget, we want to see the government take some action on this, and we want to see this done within a reasonable amount of time.

We've said from the beginning that our demand is a 15% reduction within 12 months. Let that be clear: That's on the record. We said it time and time again. I want there to be no misunderstanding about that. That is a request where we want to see results for people in Ontario, we want to see results in a meaningful way, and we want to see those results as soon as possible, as soon as practical, and we've asked for 12 months.

This request is not a request that's going to impact the government's budget. It's a zero-cost request. It's a cost of fairness; it's a request for affordability. It's a request to put people first, for a change.

We've seen changes in the industry that have put insurance companies first. We've seen changes that have reduced their costs. We've seen changes that have increased their profits. But we haven't seen changes in this industry that have benefited consumers. We haven't seen changes in the insurance industry that have benefited drivers in Ontario.

That's what we need to see. We need to see some significant changes, some real changes, some real action that actually benefits drivers for once, instead of the insurance companies.

We can all agree that times are tough, and we can do our part here today to make it clear to the people of Ontario that we believe in making life more affordable, that we believe in addressing these household costs; that we are determined to do something to make their lives a little bit better, to make their household costs a little bit more affordable. That's what we're asking the government to acknowledge today.

I hope everyone in this House votes in support of this motion. This motion is asking for something that is very reasonable. It's very measured, it's very much deserved and it's very much required. I ask you all to support this motion today. Thank you to all my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Let me state from the onset that I will be supporting the particular motion, and you may ask yourselves why. I'd like to state why: Because I believe the motion is in the spirit of work this government has been focused on since being elected in 2003—unlike the previous two governments, the two parties across from us.

The mover of the motion is focused on the success and the benefits that are being realized from the good work that this government has done from 2003, in 2010, in 2011 and in 2012. I have to say that the motion is very short-term and very short-sighted in that, yes, we all want to provide lower rates to the consumer, but I think we have to look at it as a holistic industry and make sure that

the changes we make are not very short-sighted, but it should be the centrepiece, as we go forward, for stability in this particular industry.

I just want to repeat what the Premier said this morning: "I think I've been very clear that we want to take action on this issue. More than a year ago, I had a round table in my own riding where we talked about the cost of auto insurance. Through the leadership campaign, particularly in Mississauga and Brampton, I heard concerns about the cost of auto insurance. We are going to take action, and that's why the Minister of Finance is working with the industry."

"I've been very clear that the costs of fraud that are in the system need to be taken out, and implementing the recommendations of the anti-fraud task force is very important to me. So I am very willing to take action, and those conversations are happening in the run-up to the budget between the finance minister and the industry."

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She goes on to say, "Mr. Speaker, I think I said what we are doing. We are determined to take action. We are looking for the ways to do that."

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ladies and gentlemen, there seem to be at least four or five sidebars, and it's especially noisy on the government side when their member is speaking. I'd ask for a little more quiet. If you want to talk and have little debates, take it outside. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: She goes on to say, "I think one of the important ways that we need to do that is to implement the recommendations of the anti-fraud task force. I think there are hundreds of millions of dollars that can come out of the system. What we need to do is make sure that we can tie those reductions to a premium reduction for drivers, Mr. Speaker."

"So the principle underlying the question from the leader of the opposition and the principle underlying the opposition day motion is a principle we can agree with: that the reductions in auto insurance need to be put in place. That's why the Minister of Finance is working with the industry to find the ways of doing that."

Mr. Speaker, I just want to repeat that we truly believe that savings found in the industry because we could remove fraud need to be passed on to policyholders.

My colleague from Mississauga-Brampton South will be speaking later, and she will remind this House of her private member's bill on insurance rates that she introduced in the last Parliament, clearly pointing out that the Liberal government and its members have been very concerned about this issue and acting upon it.

Speaker, we do not deny that this is an issue, which is why our government has consistently stated there is money to be found in the system. The government is moving on implementing its anti-fraud task force report. The task force recommendation is a very important step that we have to take. We are prepared to work with the

third party on this overall strategy, not just an arbitrary 15% reduction in premiums.

The Ontario Liberal government has taken strong action on auto insurance rates since we took power in 2003. I just want to go back and cover some of the steps so you understand that we have been doing this. We took action through Bill 5, right in this House, introduced in 2003, which froze auto insurance rates immediately. I believe that freeze remained in place for several years.

We introduced a package of 41 reforms in September 2010 that are stabilizing rates, and we continue to pursue ways of cracking down on fraud. Policyholders can now choose the coverage that best meets their needs while keeping costs as low as possible.

The government of Ontario also passed regulations that took effect September 1, 2010, providing consumers with more choice and flexibility to purchase coverage that best meets their protection needs and their budget.

We also created the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force in 2011. It was to focus on prevention, detection, investigation and enforcement, as well as consumer education.

Mr. Speaker, the results to date clearly show that the government actions have been working and rates have been coming down. In fact, rates in Ontario have been the lowest in the last nine years. This government is hell-bent on protecting the consumer against fraud and finding ways to reduce rates. Instead of pitting one group of people against another, we are addressing the pressures of premiums head-on by looking at the costs of those areas that are affecting the rates. We truly believe that fraud in the system is hundreds of millions of dollars, and if removed, we can definitely find a solution to the problem.

If our government was to stay focused on dealing with the fraud situation in our system on a go-forward basis, we could see insurance rates stabilize for many, many years ahead of today's request from the third party. That request today is very short-sighted and does not have anything about sustainability and stability into the future, and I believe our government is doing the right thing. I would urge our government, and I'll urge every member of this Legislature, to stay with the government, stay focused and stay on top of this particular situation so we can protect the consumer as we go forward. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Member from Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this motion. First of all, we all agree in this House that auto insurance rates are too high in this province. That's an indisputable fact. In light of this fact, the NDP have put forward this motion asking for a 15% decrease in auto insurance rates. Where they lose me is, how do they plan to achieve this target? Perhaps the most glaring thing about their rate reduction plan is that it doesn't exist.

In my everyday life I see there are a lot of things that I would like a 15% price decrease on, whether it be at the

gas pump or the grocery store, or getting a Tim Hortons coffee. However, I know that wishing prices were lower doesn't accomplish anything. There needs to be a plan of action. Today, as I look at this motion, I notice that the NDP has no plan. There's nothing more than a bumper sticker policy that lacks any real substance. The PC Party doesn't support such cheap tactics. We advocate for substantial policy that actually achieves results for Ontarians.

So if the NDP have not introduced an actual policy, what have they done? They've simply identified a symptom, a symptom of which we're all aware.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The captain of the tricksters is over there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): First and last warning to the member from Timmins—James Bay.

Continue.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: As a pharmacist, I can tell you that if you just treat the symptom you will not get better; you need to address the root cause of the illness. Ontario's high auto insurance premiums are a symptom of a number of root problems. These problems include excessive red tape that kills competition, fraud valued between \$750 million and \$1.5 billion, and a crippling mediation backlog that delays treatment to accident victims and creates undue certainty in the market.

Our debate today should be focused on these problems because they are the root cause of Ontario's high premiums. Yet the NDP seem content to continue to express their wishes for lower premiums without providing any real solution. We in the PC caucus have the medicine to treat the ills plaguing auto insurance. I'm going to use my time here today to outline four key areas that we as a Legislature should be focused on if we're going to actually deliver lower rates for Ontarians.

What we need to do is: (1) eliminate auto insurance fraud; (2) eliminate excessive red tape and encourage a more competitive, innovative market; (3) fix the dispute resolution process; and (4) increase the accountability of insurers.

We've heard a lot about fraud in the past and I'm not going to spend too much time on it because we all know it's a major cost to the system that we need to reduce. I will reiterate the PC Party's commitment to emulate other jurisdictions that have been successful in fighting fraud and establish a special unit of the crown attorneys. Fraud bureaus in other jurisdictions like New Jersey and the United Kingdom have been successful in targeting, investigating and prosecuting fraudsters. This is an important tool to help reduce fraud, bring down costs and deliver savings to consumers.

The government's own appointed anti-fraud taskforce issued a report outlining further measures to reduce the level of fraud in the system. Many of these recommendations are effective and nonpartisan. They address predatory behaviour in the towing industry, phony health care clinics and increased collaboration amongst law enforcement agencies.

We also need substantive whistleblower protection. Those brave enough to come forward to report suspected

fraud must be assured that they will be protected. This will help break a culture of silence and help law enforcement officials pursue cases against those who defraud honest drivers.

These are real solutions that I'm hoping the government will go ahead and implement. But you'll have to forgive me if I'm a little apprehensive on the prospects of them actually implementing them. This Liberal government has a library of unused reports gathering dust in their offices.

Regarding red tape and bureaucracy, we need to understand how detrimental they are to Ontarians. We must recognize that if we want to achieve savings in auto insurance the problem of red tape must be addressed. To better understand this problem, let me tell you a story of how businesses operate in the free market.

Let's say that we have a manufacturer that manufactures widgets. Every day, this manufacturer produces hundreds of widgets. It has a number of costs that go into this process: labour, raw materials, rent and energy. This company sells their widgets in an open market. It competes with others manufacturers that are trying to sell the same to consumers. Based on its analysis of demand trends and costs, the manufacturer will decide on a price to sell its product. The consumers in this example benefit from this process because all manufacturers do the same. The firms try to undercut each other in price in an effort to attract more customers. This results in lower price.

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What is the one thing that you notice about this process? The government is not directing it. Everybody can acknowledge that this system benefits the consumer by not having strict government intervention. No one would support the government telling the manufacturer how they should price their product; that is not the government's role.

Unfortunately, the government plays a large role in the determination of auto insurance rates. We have in Ontario what's called a prior-approval rate-setting process. What that means is that before an auto insurance company can set its prices, the regulator combs over every assumption made by the company. Based on the government's own analysis, they judge if the insurer's assumptions are reasonable. They can demand changes that prolong the approval process to, in some cases, over a year.

Are we to accept that the government somehow knows better the market conditions of an industry, better than the actual companies in the industry? If a company assesses market conditions correctly, it should thrive, whereas one that does not will lag. That is how the market works and compels companies to continually improve. But the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, with the prior approval process, eliminates these natural competitive forces. FSCO tries to regulate prices so that they will be fair and reasonable. However, by all accounts, they fail in this endeavour. This couldn't be more clear than by the fact that Ontario has increased their rates more than 16% since 2007, far more than any

other Canadian jurisdiction. FSCO's role should not be to direct premium levels, because it stunts competition, and, above all, they're just not good at it.

The Fraser Institute did a study where they looked at each provincial and state jurisdiction in the United States and Canada. As in Canada, auto insurance is regulated at the state level. They assessed each jurisdiction on a number of metrics, including affordability, regulatory severity, consumer choice and overall market quality. The results were clear. Ontario is ranked the sixth most regulated jurisdiction of all North America. The Fraser Institute noted that this was a major contributing factor to Ontario also being ranked 53rd in terms of pricing fairness and affordability.

So I looked at which jurisdictions performed well. Illinois caught my eye because it's similar to Ontario in terms of population, income per capita and density. Forty years ago, Illinois boldly established a completely free market for auto insurers; that is, companies could set rates without undue government intrusion or approval. People were afraid that this would lead to abuse and high rates, much like we're hearing from the sidelines. The opposite occurred. More companies entered the market. They compete for customers, giving drivers more choice, and today average premiums in Illinois are consistently below the national average, which is a lot more than Ontario can say. New Brunswick would be a Canadian example of a jurisdiction with a streamlined rate process, and their rates declined 4% since 2007.

So it's true that insurers' costs in Ontario have come down in the insurance industry over the past year. While the NDP have stated that costs have come down 50%, official audited data from the federal financial services regulator indicates that overall costs have only come down 3% to 4%. But that's beside the point. We all agree that premiums need to come down.

However, with red tape creating a long lag time in the rate-setting process, it becomes clear why we haven't seen swifter decreases. Bottom line: If you want premiums to fall, free up the market and allow for more dynamic pricing. Allow insurers to respond to lower costs by immediately implementing lower prices. Allow them to try to undercut their competitors.

To achieve this, the PC Party is proposing a file-and-use system for rate approvals. Under file-and-use, insurers submit their rates without having to obtain approval on every aspect. This expedites the process and allows prices to better reflect market conditions.

We must acknowledge that FSCO's role is not to try to predict market conditions and dictate pricing metrics to insurance companies. This is counterproductive activity that fails to deliver savings to Ontario's drivers. We need a streamlined rate approval system that allows insurers to set their own prices in response to market conditions. FSCO's role should be realigned away from active participant to strict oversight body. It's time to become the referee and not the coach.

Enhancing the competitiveness of the market also has the advantage of making the market more competitive.

With a 15% reduction, efficiency is lost and there's no room to distinguish good drivers from bad drivers. What the NDP are telling us is that even if a driver has been convicted of drunk driving, they should get a 15% reduction in their rates. This isn't fair, and we don't want to blindly encourage those who make our roads less safe. We in the PC caucus believe that our good drivers should be rewarded.

A competitive and efficient market identifies unsafe drivers. Premium levels reflect someone's risk level. Good drivers are rewarded. Any time a government interferes with this natural process, good drivers invariably subsidize the premiums of bad drivers.

At this point, I'd like to quote a victim advocacy group that presented to the finance committee last week. The testimony stated, "The NDP thinks that they're helping people by demanding a reduction in premiums, but they totally ignore the accident victims in the process."

The PC Party recognizes that for auto insurance to be any good, people who sustain an injury must have ready access to the benefits for which they have paid. To that end, the PC Party is committed to reforming Ontario's dispute resolution process. Sometimes an accident victim will end up in a dispute with their insurer over their level of benefits. Disputes are natural in any system. What is fundamental is that these disputes be resolved in a timely manner. Unfortunately, with 17,000 cases currently in backlog through the government-run dispute resolution system, claimants wait far too long to obtain the benefits they need.

Why is this? Part of the problem has to do with the fact that government has a monopoly on dispute resolution. If claimants disagree with their insurer's decision on their claim, they, by law, have to go through mediation and try to settle their claim before pursuing arbitration or the courts. Claimants must go through a FSCO-appointed mediator to do this.

Why should we restrict qualified mediators from mediating these cases? Mediation does not involve a ruling of any sort. It's a meeting where both parties come together and try to work out a settlement in order to avoid arbitration or the courts. Why do we make people wait, on average, for 414 days to obtain this service? It's time we allow for private mediators to provide people with a choice. If we allow people the ability to bypass the line at FSCO and go to a qualified private mediator, it will enable them to complete mediation sooner and ensure they resolve the dispute in a timely manner.

And when it comes to resolving disputes and obtaining medical treatment, the sooner it happens, the more likely the person will fully heal. This reduces the need for further costs in the future to the auto insurance system and our health care system.

We have to appreciate that such a backlog creates uncertainty for both the victim and the insurers. Until an insurer gets a ruling on a dispute, it doesn't know how much a certain claim will cost. The delay of this information decreases the incentive to lower rates. In any business, if you don't know what your costs are going to

be a year from now, why would you lower your price and risk incurring a loss? Expediting the dispute resolution process will ensure vital cost information is readily available. Timely information will ensure the market operates more efficiently and be better for Ontario drivers.

Finally, we need to ensure the accountability of insurers. Some very stringent consumer protection laws exist in Ontario. When it comes to pricing auto insurance, for instance, insurers cannot use credit scoring. This is an agreed-upon rule that we mandate all insurers follow, and that's fair.

When an insurer submits a rate filing, we need to ensure that the top executives are accountable. To that end, we would mandate CEOs personally approve all rate changes, and filings. This is no different than our accountability regulations that require CEOs of publicly traded companies to sign off on all financial statements and annual reports. This would make the highest executives at the insurance companies personally responsible for their company's actions. It would subject them to severe administrative and monetary penalties, should they circumvent any rules. FSCO, in its new, realigned role as a strict oversight body, would be responsible for penalizing these transgressors. This level of personal accountability will provide an incentive to companies to ensure the highest quality of internal controls and procedures.

It is the job of the government to set the rules, enforce the rules and ensure that we have an attractive market that encourages competition. This is the appropriate role for government. However, we have a regulator whose mandate is far too extensive, and in the end, Ontario drivers lose.

That is a four-point action plan to reduce auto insurance premiums for all drivers in Ontario. Unlike the motion we have before us today, if we eliminate auto insurance fraud, eliminate excessive red tape and encourage a more competitive, innovative market, fix the dispute resolution process, and increase the accountability of insurers, the drivers in Ontario will see a fairer and more affordable auto insurance system.

Before I wrap up, I'd like to point out one inconsistency in the NDP's rhetoric that I think is worth noting. On February 4, the leader of the third party said, regarding the timeline of the proposal, "It's not one that Ontarians should be waiting another two or three years to achieve.... It's a target that has to be met within a year."

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The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has a petition that indicates this reduction must be achieved by the end of 2013. Those seem like definite timelines, yet the motion put forward today uses more nebulous terminology and infers that the implementation of a reduction should be gradual. Yet when they come up and speak again, they're back to the year timeline. We're not sure what they're proposing. There's no plan behind their action, and there's no definite timeline.

I think the voters deserve to know what all of this means. Were the NDP so eager to put forward a headline-

grabbing, bumper sticker policy that they actually didn't think it through? Are we now seeing them trying to back out of a commitment they know they can't possibly follow through on?

We in the PC caucus believe that the Ontario people deserve our respect. They don't deserve empty promises or policy on the fly. They deserve a well-thought-out plan that addresses the real problems. Ontarians want real action, not promises.

That's what I've laid out here today. The PC Party stands behind real action and bold policy, not vote-grabbing window dressing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I think I should start my comments by thanking the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London for laying on the table the Insurance Bureau of Canada and the insurance industry's perspective on this issue. He did a very good job of that. He did a very good job.

Speaker, the bottom line is that the insurance industry has been given a great deal of opportunity by the Liberal government to increase their ability to make profits in Ontario, without giving any thought whatsoever to the fact that they have an obligation to provide a product that is affordable for the people of this province who are required by law to purchase that product in our province.

What New Democrats are saying is, life is already too difficult for folks. They cannot make ends meet. What we would want to see in Ontario is an action and a movement toward much more affordable living for people. Part of that affordable living includes insurance rates that are currently the highest in this country and need to come down to be much more reasonable.

We are now seeing, in Ontario, people who are choosing to drive their cars without any insurance, simply because they can't afford it. It's not like they have a choice in Ontario; they have to buy this product.

It's the obligation, therefore, of the government—because it's our policy that people have to be insured in order to drive—to make sure that the product that we require them to purchase is not only affordable but meets their needs. The government has not taken this obligation seriously, and New Democrats are determined to actually see the people of this province get some relief on their auto insurance rates.

There are a couple of pieces to this puzzle that were described inappropriately by the former speaker. I was interested to hear what the government's first speaker had to say about this because what I'm hearing now is a little bit of dancing from the government side. The Premier came out, guns ablazing, this morning; by this afternoon, it's apparent the Liberals are not interested in getting these rates down in a reasonable period of time for the people of this province.

Why do I say that? Because they refuse to acknowledge that they have already made changes in 2010 that have given the auto insurance industry a huge bonus. They are getting \$2 billion annually in savings. They

have reduced their payouts by \$2 billion annually. They've had a 50% reduction in their statutory benefit payout.

What New Democrats are saying is, fair is fair. We all know the auto insurance rates are too high in this province. We all know that we have the lowest accident rates and yet the highest auto insurance rates. Fair is fair here. If the industry is given a bonus by the government, then what they need to do is pass some of those savings on to the people of Ontario.

The government and the Premier—Premier Wynne—like to talk about the future, not the recent past, not the bonus that they've already given the insurance industry, but they just want to talk about rooting out fraud. Well, look, I think you heard from the member from the Conservative caucus. You've heard from the government. You've heard from New Democrats. We all—all of us—want to see fraud reduced. We want to see the anti-fraud task force recommendations implemented. But that is not the sum of the savings that need to be passed on to Ontarians. What needs to be passed on to Ontarians is the bonus that the insurance companies already got, plus the next round of savings that they're going to get when it comes to the anti-fraud initiatives.

How do you make that happen? Well, again, the government is talking like they're somehow going to have to figure it out: "It's difficult; it's not easy." We have something called the Financial Services Commission of Ontario; that body is the one to which insurance companies have to apply to get a rate increase. Guess what? That is also the body that can mandate the insurance companies to pass on the savings they already received, as well as the ones they will soon be getting with anti-fraud measures in place, by mandating that reduction of 15%. It is not rocket science; it is actually a plan, and it's one that is on the side of the people in this province who are good drivers.

I say "good drivers" to address, of course, some silliness that was mentioned with the previous speaker. Thinking that we would actually promote the idea that bad drivers and drunk drivers need to have their insurance rates cut—give me a break, Mr. Speaker. That is so unreasonable, it doesn't even deserve the respect of being repeated in this House, never mind said in the first place. We have been clear from day one that we want to see rates reduced for good drivers in this province. We want to see rates reduced for people who are good drivers and who have a good driving record. If people have a bad driving record, then their rates will reflect that, regardless of whether the rates in the industry are overall high or whether the rates in the industry are overall low. We know the rates are overall high; for bad drivers it's higher. What we want is overall lower rates, and for bad drivers, they're going to have to fare for themselves.

At the end of the day, it is very clear that New Democrats have been fighting for this for some time. The Liberals are pretending, I think, maybe to be onside; we'll see. The vote today is something that's important, but the most important thing—the proof that will show

whether Liberals are on the side of everyday families, of drivers in this province, of women and men who have to get into a car every day—we will see whether they're on their side when the budget comes out, because that's where the rubber will hit the road, no pun intended.

I've put it to the Premier: We're happy to see a little bit of lip service to our motion today. We're happy to see a sense that they, in principle, may support what New Democrats want to actually achieve, but we're not talking about principles or ideas; we're talking about real action and we're talking about real results, and we want to see that real action and we want to see that real result written out in the letter of the law when a budget is presented in this province within the next several weeks. That's what New Democrats are asking of this government. That's what the people of this province deserve; they deserve no less. They deserve to see their rates reduced over the next year to take into consideration what's already happened to bonus the industry as well as what's about to happen in the next couple of months to help the industry with its fraud problems.

I think it's pretty simple. I think it's a pretty realistic plan, and it's certainly a plan that the people of this province are long past due for. I'm going to end my comments by saying that I look forward not only to the support of the Liberals in principle on this motion, but I look forward to seeing a budget that allows us to know that they meant it, because frankly, not only with the auto insurance industry issue in terms of the 15% reduction, but also in terms of a five-day home care guarantee, also in terms of making sure that young people are given an opportunity to get a job, also in terms of making sure that the people on ODSP and social assistance that are earning money get to keep \$200 dollars of their earnings without a clawback, also ensuring that corporate tax loopholes are closed in this province and ensuring overall that there's a balanced approach to balancing our books—those are the things New Democrats are looking for in the budget, and if we don't see them, we won't be supporting that budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a real pleasure for me to stand up here in the House and to speak to this specific motion introduced by the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. I want to begin, actually, by saying, I guess in a way, kudos to the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton for the hard work that he has put in over the last number of weeks and months regarding this particular issue.

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I know that it's an issue that's near and dear to the hearts of many Ontarians, particularly those living in and around the greater Toronto area. Certainly, over the course of my by-election campaign back in August and September in the riding of Vaughan there was a great deal of discussion on the campaign trail. When I had a chance to speak with voters in my community about some of the issues that they were concerned about, some of the stuff that they felt was important for them and for

their families, auto insurance rates did come up from time to time. I know that since my election back on September 6, these conversations have continued at my local office in Vaughan and they continue in my community, in some of the town hall meetings that I've had over the last three or four months. There are individuals who come forward and do have concerns, not so much just about increases they see—but, I guess, a little bit of a lack of clarity or understanding about why they're seeing some of the increases that they're seeing, so I think it's really important that we are having this discussion here in the House today.

I think it's important that the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has brought this issue to the floor with a motion today. I think it's really important as well for us to recognize that over the last number of weeks both the Premier and the Minister of Finance have spoken out repeatedly on this issue and have said that it's important for them and important for all of us here on this side of the House to work with both of the opposition parties, to work with members like the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, to engage in the kind of discussion and dialogue to make sure that we, working with them, working with people back in our communities, but also working with the industry itself, can make sure we put forward realistic, balanced, reasonable proposals that help provide some of that clarity that people in my community say they want around the issue of auto insurance, that help those individuals whose perception is that they're being unfairly treated so that they can feel that they're being treated in a more balanced and fair way.

For example, as I said a second ago, Premier Wynne has said that we are determined to work and we are happy to work with members on all sides of this House regarding this issue, but we also do want to work with industry. I know that there have been discussions. I'm sure that some of the speakers who came before me have talked about the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force. I don't think that we can underscore what kind of role the issue of fraud plays with respect to auto insurance prices. I think we have to be cognizant of the fact that there's an issue there. I think we also have to recognize that our government, over the last number of months and since September 2010, has actually moved in the direction of doing our best to crack down on some of the fraud that we're talking about. For example, in December 2010, Speaker, our government introduced a package of 41 reforms that are actually helping to stabilize the rates and are cracking down on the fraud that I talked about, fraud that the task force has also talked about. For example, some of the reforms that we introduced back in September 2010 mean that more dollars are able to go to accident victims rather than assessment and transaction costs. They mean that drivers will be able to choose the coverage that best needs their needs while keeping their costs as low as possible. They're reforms that will help make the system more affordable, especially for the nine million Ontario drivers who are never in a position to make a claim. We also introduced, as I said, in 2011 that

particular anti-fraud task force, which has focused on prevention, detection, investigation and enforcement, as well as consumer education.

There is a lot of work and a lot of detailed analysis that needs to go into this. But I think it's important to recognize at this point in time that there is recognition on this side of the House that our government does need to work with all of the interested parties to make sure that we can be in a position to deliver the kind of positive results for the people of our respective communities that they demand of us and that they deserve here in this House.

Just the other day—just yesterday, in fact, I think it was—when I had the chance to speak to another piece of legislation, I talked about the importance of making sure that when we are here and doing the people's business we are doing our very best to make sure that we can deliver—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There's quite a lot of noise coming down from the third party area. There's about nine conversations going on. I'm having trouble hearing the speaker. He's at that end, too. So I would like you to take it outside if you want discussions, especially the member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate that.

It is a really important issue, as I was saying a second ago. I think it's also important that, as I mentioned when I was speaking to another piece of legislation just the other day, the people in my community expect us to be in this House and expect us to try and provide them with the kind of positive measurable results, and that's what our government is determined to do, on this file. I know it's what Minister Sousa and Premier Wynne are determined to do as well, working with all of us and, as I said earlier, working with some of the members opposite.

I did come across a quote, which I believe was printed in some media today, where a member from the Progressive Conservative caucus talked about this being bumper sticker politics—"just bumper sticker politics"—nothing more than that. I think that actually is a little bit of an unfair characterization around the meaningful discussion and work that's taking place in this House with members from our caucus, members from the third party and I sincerely hope members from the official opposition, to come together, to work together, to take a look at the recommendations that have come out of the task force, to talk to industry, to talk to the other stakeholders and certainly to talk to the affected drivers, whether we're talking about the GTA or other parts of Ontario, to try and construct and build the kind of consensus we need to make sure that we're not simply putting a band-aid over a problem.

People definitely do feel, as they are preparing their household budgets, that they have concerns around the cost of auto insurance. That's an undeniable fact. But we want to make sure that we provide reasonable, mean-

ingful solutions so that we're not back in this place again in a number of weeks or months or even in a couple of years, saying that we haven't actually provided the kind of relief or the solutions that they're looking for.

The people of my community of Vaughan, and I'm certain the people in communities like Thornhill and others, are determined to make sure that their representatives are here in this House, putting our best foot forward to make sure that we provide them with that kind of reasonable solution, that kind of long-lasting and enduring solution. But, Speaker, that can only really happen in the most effective way possible if we're all working on these problems together and we're not taking the easy way out by characterizing an important discussion like that which we have in this motion today as simply "bumper sticker politics."

The official opposition, I think, is better than that. One of the members opposite called this discussion "bumper sticker politics." I don't believe that's an accurate or fair characterization. That's why we on this side of the House, in the government caucus—again, under the leadership of Kathleen Wynne, the Premier, and Minister Sousa—are so determined to work with those who are willing partners, like the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton and the members of the third party, on this kind of challenge so that we can provide a solution to the people of our respective communities and make sure that we move this debate forward, that we actually get the achievable results that they're looking for in the best way possible.

Speaker, that's why I'm really happy to stand here in my place today to speak on this particular motion and to encourage the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton and all members in this House to continue to work together to find the kind of resolution and the kind of solutions that people in all of our communities demand of us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have a few things to say on the subject of this resolution, because I do believe that the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has taken with a great degree of passion the concept of addressing a problem for the province of Ontario and for all of those of us who drive cars and have to buy automobile insurance.

I think at that point we have to part company. My auto insurance rates have been just as ridiculous, if not more so, than many. I, at a given point, was paying \$300 or \$400 a month, and it has been as high as \$600 a month. Part of that was due to the four tickets I had simultaneously, but when they all fell off my record, I was still at \$300 a month, and I had to go insurance shopping in the province of Ontario and finally found one that was reasonable. To display the array of rates or to shine some light on it here in debate, I'm now paying \$140 a month on the same car. As the saying goes, go figure.

The point, however, is not whether or not there's passion on the part of my friend from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. The question is how we're going to deal with it.

His resolution says, "In the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the Wynne government to direct FSCO to gradually reduce average, industry-wide, private passenger auto insurance premiums by 15%." That's all it says.

So the first question I had when I read that is, Why 15%? Why not 2% or 7% or 22% or who the heck knows what? What is the rationale for 15%? I'm going to get to that in a minute. But I do want to quote from a news report that crossed my desk today. I believe that I'm quoting from CP24. It goes like this: "Members of Ontario's Liberal government will vote for an NDP motion calling for a 15% cut in auto insurance premiums, but don't bank on big savings just yet."

"The motion, which is not binding on the government, calls on the Liberals to mandate a gradual, industry-wide reduction of 15% in auto insurance rates...."

"The Liberals have maintained the best way to reduce insurance premiums is to combat fraud, the same position taken by the Insurance Bureau of Canada."

"The move by the Liberals to vote for the motion shows the minority government is willing to meet demands the NDP has made to support the upcoming budget and avoid triggering a provincial election."

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Now we have isolated what we're looking at here and why we're looking at it. We have to understand, specifically for people who are looking in on us today, that this is not a binding motion. Regardless of who votes for this motion, it doesn't have to have any teeth in it, ultimately.

Anyway, the concept of putting a motion like this forward and calling for 15%—a particularly arbitrary figure—makes about as much sense as milking a bull. This 15% is an arbitrary number that the NDP has drawn out of a hat. I tried to guess as to why 15%. I think it's because the NDP—or, as we here like to call them, the socialist arm of the Liberal Party of Ontario—picked on 15% because they think that's what the profit margins are. They don't like the idea of profit. That's the nearest I can come.

In a serious vein, I have to say that what we're looking for here is a multi-pronged solution to a serious and complex problem that besets all Ontarians who drive automobiles and/or pay for automobile insurance.

To the point made by the leader of the third party, the concept of having 400,000 people in the province of Ontario driving around without insurance is not new. It has been like that for at least 10 years that I'm well aware of, inside and out of my political life. In fact, there are somewhere in the same vicinity of that number of people driving around without licences in the province of Ontario—another entirely different problem.

Being against this isn't even partisan; it's just common sense. Even the industry is against political pandering and picking a number out of a hat and saying, "That's what we want, and, by the way, it's a bargaining chip for a budget"—says it all.

The spokesperson for the Insurance Bureau of Canada is Pete Karageorgos. He said, "I don't think she,"

referring to the leader of the third party, "has thought it through." IBC issued a statement that called it a "band-aid solution that may score political points, but for the long term, all stakeholders need to continue to push for needed reforms and fight fraud."

We were, as a party, willing participants last summer in a task force under the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs that isolated fraud as the biggest problem in the insurance industry that causes this rate problem. There is no question that auto insurance rates in Ontario are high, but premiums in the province of Ontario, I might say, have increased by 65% in the last 10 years. What's significant about the last 10 years? It has been under the tutelage of the government of the Liberal Party. I don't know anyone in this province who has had salary increases to sustain that kind of an increase—65%.

Instead of a drop in the ocean, the Ontario PC Party wants to target the root cause of the issue, and that is, I think all parties agree, auto insurance fraud. It costs the system \$1.6 billion annually. If we had \$1.6 billion back, I would suggest to you that insurance rates would drop, and more than just marginally.

The McGuinty-Wynne Liberals have been promising a reduction for almost 10 years. They promised a 10% reduction within 90 days of winning the election in 2003, and you folks who came in here in 2003 know that very well. Instead, there was an 11% increase that year. That's what you can expect from the Liberal Party. If the Liberal government really wanted to reduce auto insurance rates, they would have done it already. As a matter of fact, there's a commercial on the radio for a weight-loss guy named Harvey Brooker, whom I happen to know. His slogan is, "If you could have done it yourself, you would have done it already." You made that promise.

The numbers that the NDP are giving are not even an accurate reflection of reality. When the NDP did their math—if you can call it math—the IBC said that the NDP did not consider expenses that insurance companies have, just their claim payouts. The NDP actually doesn't have a lot of track record when it comes to arithmetic.

At a time when Ontario needs to create jobs, this ill-conceived attempt at policy would result in layoffs in an industry that employs 77,000 Ontarians. Governments should not be dictating how the private sector is going to be run. We're on record on a number of files on this. The proposal is coming from the same party that put forward a private member's bill last year that would have seen convicted drunk drivers paying less for automobile insurance. Frankly, the last place that we should be taking direction on this is from the NDP. These are the folks who essentially are having rings installed in their noses that are being pulled by the Liberal Party right now.

The 15% across the board also means that bad drivers will pay less. Is that really what you want? Is that what you want, for bad drivers to pay less? The anti-fraud task force was created in 2011 to produce regulatory change, but it hasn't gone far enough, and the findings have yet to

be touched. There's been a lot of talk about the good work that it did, but we haven't seen any action, and that work was done about eight months ago. Right now, as my colleague has said, there are 17,000 claims backlogged in dispute resolution, and it takes an average of 414 days to complete a mediation case.

In addition to looking at ways of eradicating fraud in the system, the Ontario PC Party wants to increase accountability, reform the dispute resolution process so people don't have to wait a year and a half, and reduce bureaucracy to create competition, which means lower premiums for all Ontarians.

I can tell you something: I have had the insurance people in my office. There are precious few American companies that are up here in Ontario selling insurance, and the reason is, in their words, "It's a dog's breakfast for automobile insurance." Have you ever heard of a field of discipline or a field of endeavour where Americans, the world's greatest marketers—arguably—would not participate because they feel that the playing field is so ridiculously out of kilter they don't want to be there?

Ontario cannot afford populist band-aid solutions, especially from a party that really can't count.

So if you believe that this 15% cut is good policy, I've got some swampland in Florida. Come and see me after this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hope to bring some clarity to the debate instead of a whole bunch of clichés. Let's start with what has happened.

In the year 2010, this Legislature dramatically reduced benefits that were paid by insurance companies. It was part of the package. In 2010, this Legislature and this government were warned by consumers, by lawyers, by doctors, by those who had been injured in catastrophic accidents, exactly what was going to happen if the benefits were cut, and in fact the government didn't listen to those people; they listened to the insurance industry. As a result, the insurance companies won, and the 65,000 people who are injured in accidents every year in this province lost. It was neither discreet nor was it focused. The government did this to save the insurance industry the costs. It was not consumer-focused, and it was not focused on the injured of Ontario and the pain and suffering that they have gone through.

We have heard in the finance committee in the last couple of days—a number of people have come forward to talk about what happened in 2010 and are seeking some form of redress. I am particularly thankful to Laurie Davis, who is here in the audience today, from the Ontario Rehab Alliance, for putting together a pretty good paper—exactly what happens to consumers who find themselves injured as a result of automobile accidents in the province of Ontario.

First and foremost, the minor injury guideline states that only \$3,500 can be given to an accident victim. This is the lowest in all of Canada. Not even Prince Edward

Island confines it to \$3,500, but we do that here in Ontario.

The next thing: Case law is allowed to be used against people who are injured in the province of Ontario as a result of what the Liberals call the reform of 2010. Now, today, in Ontario, if you suffer from leukemia or Parkinson's disease or a whole range of other things, the insurance company is allowed to say, "That's a pre-existing condition. Maybe you shouldn't have been in the car in the first place." That is totally wrong.

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We know that serious injuries in the province of Ontario used to be covered up to \$100,000. That's why you pay liability insurance. That has been reduced to \$50,000.

We need to know what is being bought here today.

As a result of all this—it was done without any consumer education whatsoever, so the insurance companies today, when they send out the form and people willingly sign it and send it back—only 1.4% of all people even question what is contained within the body of the insurance policy. The reality is that today we, as consumers, are buying an inferior product for more money. That's the reality. I want to say it again: We are buying an inferior product for more money, and the consumer ultimately is the loser.

Now, all those people who don't have an accident this year—about 99% of all drivers won't have an accident; they won't have an injury; they won't suffer. But they're suffering in the pocketbook. They bought the inferior product at an increased cost.

For my Conservative friends, in this country we pride ourselves on not being Americans. We pride ourselves that it's not a dog-eat-dog world like they are trying to produce. We pride ourselves that governments have an obligation, and do protect their citizens, and protect them in the case of monopolies. We pride ourselves that we have institutions like the CRTC that take on the telephone companies and television and Big Media. We pride ourselves that hydro is regulated so that consumers don't get gouged. We pride ourselves that we have things in place to help the poor in terms of their housing and the escalating costs. We do that because it's right and because these are necessities of life.

The insurance industry—they're there. They make money; they're supposed to make money. But, you know, each and every year throughout this entire recession, from 2007 until today, they have made a 9.5% profit. Now, think about that. How many manufacturers are making a 9.5% profit? Even the banks in Canada don't make a 9.5% profit. There's hardly a single industry, a single person, that does commerce in this country that makes that kind of profit. And we allow them to make up to 12%, due to outdated regulations.

The time has come to change all this. The time has come to put the consumer first. The time has come to put the accident victims—make sure they are protected. The time has come to pass the motion put forward by my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. The time has

come for all members of this House to think about their constituents and not think about an industry that is totally bloated and is continuing to provide poor service for too much money.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to speak on the motion put forward by the third party.

We all want lower insurance rates; there is no question about it. I also share the concern about high insurance rates expressed by the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton in this motion. Until this morning, they were talking about reducing the rates gradually. Now they are setting the timeline.

The Financial Services Commission doesn't have a magic bullet to reduce rates. We must look at the root cause of why rates are higher in certain areas. The member from Thornhill, the member from Scarborough–Rouge River, the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London and the member from Vaughan confirmed that the root cause is fraud. I also strongly believe that the root cause is fraud.

That is why I introduced my private member's bill on June 1, 2011, so that by eliminating fraud, we could reduce premium rates. The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton was not even elected to the House at that time.

Last year, in the month of March 2012, I reintroduced my private member's bill. It was debated in the House, and it passed the second reading, whereas on April 26, 2012, the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, in this House, asserted, and I quote from Hansard, "What I'm saying is that fraud is not the majority cause of the increase in our insurance rates." I disagree with the member. I strongly believe that fraud is the most dreadful beast that must be tackled first and foremost.

High auto insurance rates have been a concern for our government for quite some time. That is why we brought reforms in 2010; those reforms are working and the rates have gone down by 0.26%. That is why we created the anti-fraud task force, and I'm pleased to share with this House that the anti-fraud task force has embraced some recommendations of my private member's bill, and the major component they reconfirmed: The root cause is fraud.

Hon. Mario Sergio: That was a good bill.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Yes, thank you.

The record of the respective governments tells the whole story. We have kept auto insurance rates below the inflation rate. When the PCs were in power, the rates went up 43%, and when the NDP were in power, the rates went up 27%.

I would like to ask the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, or any other longer-serving member in the NDP caucus—they promised to make it a public asset—why they were unable to deliver.

Interjection: They never did.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: They never did. Instead of that, in 1993, they passed legislation and the rates went up.

I strongly urge the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and the third party to not waste more of their time and devote their attention to the real cause: how to tackle fraud. Let's work together to tackle fraud, to combat fraud. That is the way to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's great to stand here today and debate this opposition motion by the third party.

In my riding, I can tell you that insurance companies are small businesses. As a matter of fact, I know many of the owners of these businesses personally. In many cases, they're smaller family businesses. We are talking about eastern Ontario, where the driving records are very, very safe and the number of claims are not very high.

McDougall Insurance, for instance, has been in business for over 60 years in downtown Belleville and right throughout the Quinte region. Since 1946, as a matter of fact, they've been in business and they employ more than 140 people. So they are a small business in our area. Whitley Insurance has been in business for 60-plus years as well. They're an active community partner, mostly in the Quinte West area over in my colleague Rob Milligan's riding. Mackay Insurance has also been serving Belleville since 1974. So these are small businesses that are entrenched in our community.

Sometimes our friends in the third party, in the NDP, like to portray the insurance companies as these big, massive giants and these faceless corporations that exist. But I can tell you that in Prince Edward–Hastings I know them as community people. They're passionate volunteers in our community. Many of them are huge supporters of the Belleville Bulls hockey team and our minor hockey programs, and they sponsor all kinds of local things in our communities.

I think sometimes in this Legislature, when we're spilling out this rhetoric—

Interjection.

Mr. Todd Smith:—spewing out the rhetoric; thank you very much—we get carried away and we forget who's really impacted by some of the things we're talking about here today. So I just want you to keep that in mind as you're listening to the debate here this afternoon. These are small business people, and as the small business critic for the Progressive Conservative Party, it's our duty to stand up for them as well, because they're employing people in our community.

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As the small business critic for the PC Party, and because of the shocking lack of detail in this motion and what it does to threaten businesses in our communities, I feel it's important for me to stand up and say a few words. I know that in parts of Ontario, auto insurance premiums are very high; there's no question about that. Insurance premiums are extremely high in Peel region. Having sat down and talked with the business owners in my area since becoming the MPP for Prince Edward–Hastings riding, I have an understanding of exactly how much lower auto insurance premiums are in my riding

than they are in the rest of the province. But there's a reason for that. It's because the claims are much smaller and there aren't nearly as many of them.

What this motion doesn't do is provide any specifics for how we're actually doing to solve this problem. This is a populist agenda on behalf of the third party. They think if they get out there and say, "We're going to reduce auto insurance rates by 15%"—where they've pulled the number from, we're not exactly sure. But we have seen a bit of a climb-down from where the third party was just a few weeks ago, and I think we're now seeing that we do have a bit of a coalition going on here in the Legislature.

The thing is that they're now talking about gradual decreases. Before, it was hard and fast: "We have to reduce the cost of insurance by 15%, or else we're not going to support this scandal-plagued government any longer." Then yesterday in question period we heard, "Well, if they do it gradually over the next hundred years or so, maybe we'll support them." I think what we're seeing is a third party that really has no principle. They're throwing this out there trying to win support. We have no idea what they mean by "gradual"—we really don't. We haven't seen any details on the rest of this policy as well. We have no idea where that 15% number came from. We have no idea—from them, anyway—how the reduction is actually going to be accomplished and get drivers in the province a break that they deserve.

It's less a motion that we're debating here than it is wishful thinking on behalf of the third party. My colleagues in the House have already heard in some detail the PC plan proposed by the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London to lower auto insurance rates in Ontario. He has been doing yeoman work on this since he was given this file by our leader, Tim Hudak, working in collaboration with our finance critic, Peter Shurman, as well.

But as the PC critic for small business and red tape, I'd like to touch on a specific area, and that is the reduction of red tape in the insurance sector. Every time I stand here, no matter what the issue is—whether it's agriculture or whether it's energy or whether it's real estate, like we were debating last Thursday here in the Legislature—everything is bound up in red tape in this province, and the government really doesn't have a plan to reduce the red tape that is strangling our businesses, including the insurance sector.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimates that small business owners spend between eight and 10 hours a week with red tape and regulation—filling out paperwork and complying with this and that and the other thing. It has also been shown that red tape and regulation is costing this province about a billion dollars a year in economic activity. That's a billion dollars a year in economic activity that could be going to pay for our health care, that could be going to education, that could be going to pay for our social programs, that could be going to pay for transit to relieve the gridlock here in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

Few sectors of the economy are as heavily regulated as the insurance sector is. In few other sectors would the government specifically be able to dictate what can be factored into the cost of a product, or even what that product can be sold for. When we're talking about small businesses, like we are in my riding, any increase in red tape increases the cost of a product. It doesn't matter if you're selling guitars or you're selling auto parts or you're selling auto insurance, red tape is a factor in strangling business.

Small business owners exist on incredibly small profit margins. Every dollar that goes back into business usually goes to supporting their families. We should be talking about how we can create more successful small businesses in the province. It's something we don't talk about nearly enough, because small businesses are employing 90% of the people here in Ontario.

Reducing red tape, for many of these smaller firms, is going to help bring costs down. Is it the only answer? No, but it's part of a much more comprehensive plan.

You heard our member from Elgin—Middlesex—London, who spoke about our plan for how we were going to reduce the costs of auto insurance in the province. It was a fairly comprehensive plan, and I'm sure he only scratched the surface on what needs to be done. This isn't a simple fix; it's not going to be done quickly. For some reason, the Liberal government understood that a couple of days ago, but now, suddenly, they realize that maybe they want to stay in power for a little bit longer. They're going to cuddle up to the third party and agree to give them what they need so we can allow this scandal-plagued government to continue to live here in Ontario for that much longer.

It's too easy to stand up, point at a target and say, "That's to blame for everything that's wrong with auto insurance." I think that's what we're seeing here. We're talking about a very complicated financial service, and there's no one quick fix for it; for the third party to stand up and pretend there is lacks credibility. For the government to support that kind of thinking shows exactly how eager this Premier is to keep from going down in history as one of Ontario's shortest-lived Premiers and shortest-lived governments, and I think that's what we're seeing right here in the House today.

Thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As a long-serving member of this Legislature, I've been looking forward to giving this speech since 1993, I must say.

First of all, let's say what this really is. This is an ability for this Legislature to try to give drivers in this province a break. They have seen their auto insurance rates go up over the last number of years, at the same time that largesse and gifts from the Liberal government have allowed those insurance companies to increase their profits, which is okay, but the promise was, at the time when the Minister of Finance said he would give them all these tools in order to be able to increase their profits,

that those profits would be shared by way of rate decreases to the drivers of this province. By and large, that hasn't happened, so we're here and we're calling on the government and this House to, within 12 months, give us a 15% decrease in automobile insurance.

I just want to say upfront that I support my colleague's motion wholeheartedly, but I've only got five minutes, so I want to take this time to say a couple of things.

First of all, I was just rather interested, listening to some of the comments from the Conservative caucus. The Conservatives were accusing New Democrats of having a shocking lack of detail as to what we're doing, this from the party that can only vote "no." The only thing they know is to say the word "no." They don't have any detail on anything. The only word they have is "no," N-O. And they're trying to tell me that we have a lack of detail? I understand one thing from Tories, and that's the word "no," because the only thing I have heard from Conservatives and Tim Hudak since getting here, since the last election, is the word "no." My God, what culot these people have.

Then I hear wonderful speeches from the front bench of the Tory caucus. The Tories say this is like trying to milk a bull. Only Conservatives would be silly enough to milk a bull. I've got to tell you, it is not a warm and fuzzy feeling. You've got to go to the cow to get the milk, not the bull.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for that wonderful outburst.

I'll remind the member from Oxford that we don't cross-talk; we go through moi. I thank you for all that excitement from the member from Timmins—James Bay.

Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Whoa, whoa, whoa.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You're not done?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You sat down.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timmins—James Bay sat down before I got up, so I thought he was done. Well, here's how it goes: Keep an eye on me, what I'm doing.

Continue.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Not a problem. Thank you very much for that, Mr. Speaker.

Again I say to my colleagues in the Conservative Party: Beware of milking bulls. You may get in a lot of trouble.

I then say to my friends on the Liberal side of the House the following: The one thing that I've learned from watching Liberals over these last nine years is it's all about the political self-interest of the Liberal Party. They are so interested in making sure that they're able to survive as Liberals and do what's good for their friends that they're not very good at doing what's right for the people of this province.

1700

What is this debate all about? They have given a large share of ability to the insurance companies to increase their profits, and rightfully so. Nobody is opposed to a company making money, least of all me or the New Democrats. But we believe there is a social responsibility in passing on some of those profits back to the shareholder, which in this case happens to be the people who buy their product.

Let's review what the Liberals have done over the last number of years. The first thing they did was they gave a billion dollars to their consultant friends on the eHealth scandal. They thought it was perfectly okay to give an opportunity to their friends within the consultant field to bill eHealth exorbitant amounts of money to the point where the first debacle we had was a billion dollars on eHealth. Then they said, "Oh, no, don't worry. We'll never do that again. We got caught. We know we cost people a billion dollars. We can't give people the savings on their auto insurance, but we'll never do it again."

Then what do they do? Along comes Ornge; they create Ornge. They end up taking apart a perfectly good air ambulance system in this province and they create another scandal that cost how much? Another billion dollars. So \$2 billion now for Liberals to help their friends.

Then they go back and they say to the auto insurance companies, "We're going to do things to reduce your liability to drivers when they are in an accident and we're going to let you become more profitable." They give almost \$2 billion to the insurance companies.

Then you get to the gas plants—my God. To save one seat, they did \$600 million; a total of \$1.3 billion given out to save some seats. Why? Because it was in the Liberal political self-interest. That's another \$1.3 billion. And where are we at? Not one saving on to the people of this province.

And, yes, we as New Democrats stand in this House proud and we say we will do what's right for the people of this province, because, my friends, when you come to this place, it's not about Liberal political self-interest. It's about the interests of the people of this province, and we think it's wrong to waste billions of dollars on eHealth, billions of dollars on Ornge, billions of dollars on gas plants—about to give \$1.3 billion to large corporations on tax cuts they don't need. And you can't give 15% to the drivers of this province? I say to you, shame.

Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats will stand proud with the people of this province and always remember we are sent here by the people of this province to do what is right. And, yes, we believe 15% is fair and it has to happen now, within the next 12 months. I urge this government to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Wow. Speaker, I have to say it's very hard to follow—

Interjections.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Yes, it's very, very hard to follow. But I have been enjoying the—

Interjection.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I can't afford that again, no.

I have been enjoying the presentations by every member of the House, especially the last one. He's always meaningful and entertaining, I have to say, Speaker. And if we look at records—I may touch on that, because I think no one can avoid the—of the time, if you will, Speaker, as we deal with this particular issue here.

But let me say at the outset that I will support the bill, and I will support it for a number of reasons—not necessarily that it's perfect, because it isn't. If I may, Speaker, the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton may want to look at the title itself and may want to make some adjustment in his final remarks and maybe explain exactly what he intends to do with the bill. But first he says 15%; then he says “gradually reduce average.” Well, are we reducing by 15% or are we reducing average? I hope that he will explain that.

Then he says “industry-wide”: Does it mean including vans, trucks, trailers, whatever you have? And then “private passenger auto.” I think we have to explain very well.

One of the reasons that I support it is because it sounds good and it is good. People, especially in my area, working-class people, when they hear 15%, say, “Wow. That's excellent.” But you know what, Speaker? It has a good intention—that is fine—and I'll be happy if instead of 15% it will be 14%, it will be 13%, it will be 10%, it will be 9%, it will be 7%. I'll be happy with a 1%, 2%, 3%, 4% or 5% reduction.

Interjection: We won't. We want 15%.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Well, if you think you're going to get 15%, I'll be happy with 15%.

Then again, by looking at the record—you know, there is one particular thing in this House: We can say anything we want because we are protected by the wonderful laws that we enjoy in the House here. But we have Hansard that records—

Interjection: It's privilege.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Yes, it's the privilege, if you will—we have the Hansard that records every whisper that we say in this House here. Everything is recorded. We can go back to what the NDP did, what the Conservatives did, what the Liberals did. The record is there. We cannot run away from that, even though sometimes we say in the House things that are not so true. But they will go because we are working in this particular place here.

So I will support the bill for those reasons, and if we can't obtain 15%, I'll be happy with anything we are going to get on behalf of our people. The member from Thornhill says, “Why stop at 15%? Well, let's go for 25%, 20%.” It's not a question of that. It's not a simple solution. We have to be very realistic, and I have to say in defence of the Liberals—because it's easy to point fingers, and I don't like to point fingers. It's easy to accuse the government, accuse the Liberals. I have to say that since 2003, I believe, to 2012, the increase has been

lower than the rate of inflation. I think it was around 14% if my memory serves me well. The rate of inflation was 18.1%.

I don't have to tell you, Speaker. They know the record, because they are Conservative or they are NDP members here. They know how much the insurance rates went up when they were in power—and certainly cannot compare to our own record.

The fact is that there is a huge problem out there associated with the industry, and it's everybody's responsibility to make sure that we're trying to curtail that. So it's not the fault of one government or the other. They did some things, but in the long run, it has been created, it has been out there, and not very much has been done, not as much as should have been done, but it's about time that we have some serious conversations with the auto industry, with all the stakeholders, within the House here, and we must put an end to the fraud, to the \$1-billion-a-year fraud that goes on in this particular province here. Because, at the end, do you know who is paying the price? You, me and all our people; we are, Speaker. I think it's in the interest—I forgot my colleague here gave me a time when it's my time. I have to leave some 10, 12 minutes, so I think I'm almost done.

I think we have to be very realistic of what we are asking, because those insurance companies are providing insurance for our people here. When we intend to do something good and reasonable, we have to make sure that it is good and reasonable and it can be attained on behalf of the people of Ontario. If we can't, if we don't, then it means we are just playing games, and we don't want to play games. No one wants to play games. If the bill is proposed and it intends to bring some relief to our people, then we should make sure that indeed we bring it to completion and bring some relief to our people.

So what is the problem really, then? The fraud—the fraud is tremendous. Indeed, in the package that we introduced in 2010, with that, maybe we didn't go deep enough, maybe we didn't go far enough. But the rates that particular year—in 2012, let's say, they only went up by 0.26%, not even 1%, not even half a per cent. But was that enough, what we did with respect to the anti-fraud task force? No, maybe not. Maybe we should look at the real cost and look at prevention, detection, investigation, enforcement and education, as well, that are the problem out there.

That is the problem. When we build an industry that is really growing out of fraud or crime, then there is something wrong, because out of that, our people are being affected. This is where we should be concentrating our efforts.

1710

So I laud the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton for pushing very forcefully. I have to say that before the member introduced his motion, I was asking my fellow members in the NDP to co-sponsor my motion—the same motion. They, of course, said, “No, we're going to have our own.” Good for them. We are here today. I'm very pleased that we are here to discuss and debate the

motion. Let's see what may come out of this that ultimately our people are going to benefit from.

I know that Minister Jeffrey wants to address the motion herself. I want to make sure she has enough time to address the issue, but I would hope that as we move along we can bring some improvements to the motion. I commend the member and I wish him well. If it's not 15%, I want to see this gradually. I don't want to wait to get back curly hair before I see that 15%.

Interjection: You're okay.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm okay the way I am? Terrific.

Anyway, I thank you for your time and my compliments again to the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm pleased to speak to the motion today. It's obviously something that affects every driver in Ontario. Auto insurance premiums, especially in the GTA or Peel, are extremely high. I hear a lot from my constituents in the region of Waterloo and Kitchener-Conestoga, whether they're picking up kids, driving to their job, travelling to and from school, that's it's costing more and more money each day.

In fact, under this government, Ontario has far exceeded other Canadian provinces in terms of those premiums, and they've taken a spike of roughly 16% since 2007 because of a lot of the structural problems or regulatory decisions made by this Liberal government.

In my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, I had a constituent who was in not too long ago, who owns a small business. She rarely needs to drive during the day unless she's going about her business in terms of picking up groceries or her children etc. She told me how insurance rates are continuing to climb, even though she is driving less than she did five years ago and has a clean driving record. On top of being a small business owner and dealing with numerous certifications and regulations that she has to deal with in her small business, she's finding it hard to keep up. So, clearly, something needs to be done.

However, a mandated reduction in insurance rates is simply not sustainable. This motion, raised by the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, has some good intentions, but as we have said today, it's nothing but cheap, cynical populist pandering—so it is. In fact, I have heard time and time again from members of the NDP—not MPPs but members of the NDP—that at one time they actually believed in something. Now they're simply trying to appeal to the lowest common denominator.

As we heard, the member from Timmins-James Bay brought up this scandal-plagued government in his remarks and talked about power plants and Ornge and eHealth. But I want to remind him that they are complicit in the McGuinty-Wynne government's failures and scandals now. Don't forget that.

Again, back to the motion we're talking about today, in terms of it being really just cynical populist pandering. This approach was taken in New Jersey back in 1998. The government there mandated that insurance com-

panies reduce their premiums 15%. While those residents had relief for two years, rates spiked 26% from 2000 to 2003.

The number one thing I hear when I talk with folks is the fraud problem, which unfortunately isn't much addressed in this motion. I had an instance where a driver was making a left-hand turn. There were two cars in front and the driver waved the car on and moved into the oncoming lane. Then the driver ran up and smashed the other car, because that car was in the lane—I mean, insurance fraud. These guys are making a business out of it. In fact, just last month, Toronto police arrested 37 people for making false claims about whiplash. These organized groups of people have been staging accidents like I just mentioned, making false claims and receiving up to \$50,000 in return.

I want to thank my colleague from Middlesex-London for outlining our plan to address these specific structural concerns. We talked about reducing the excess bureaucracy to encourage competition that would allow for innovation and would serve customers better. We talked about addressing fraud here in Ontario by creating a special unit of the crown attorney's office to investigate and prosecute. We would reform the dispute resolution process, allowing private mediators and certified independent assessors to mediate disputes. This would get rid of the backlog of claims in the system. Jeff also talked about how we would increase accountability, making the CEOs personally responsible and subject to penalties.

I want to commend him for those thoughtful structural changes that truly are needed to address this problem, instead of this cheap and cynical populist pandering that we've seen from the third party. They've now resorted to cheap tricks for political stunts, and that's nothing more than what you've got here.

Thank you, Speaker, for the debate. I know my colleague from Durham will finish up the rest of the time for our caucus.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm pleased to speak for a couple of minutes and to bring a northwestern Ontario perspective to this debate.

This motion responds to some serious concerns that are being raised by northerners, who rely on their vehicles to get to and from work, to travel to medical appointments, to pick up groceries, and other essential activities. Northerners don't have the option of jumping on a bus or travelling by subway to perform these tasks. We have to rely on our vehicles, and in many cases, it's not even a matter of travelling down the road. In many cases, it's actually a matter of travelling 50, 100 or 200 kilometres or even more, which makes the use of our vehicles essential in our daily lives.

As a result, the cost of auto insurance is one of the complaints that I hear the most about in Kenora-Rainy River. I represent dozens and dozens of communities, municipalities and First Nations, and I've heard the complaints from one end of the riding to the other.

Just a few days ago, I received an email from a father in Kenora. He writes, "My daughter, who is 20, just received her insurance policy renewal. It has gone up over 25% from last year. My broker advises that all insurance policies for individuals under 25 have increased. This increase was approved by the provincial government. Can you advise if this is true and what can be done about it?"

That's a very straightforward question: What can be done about it? That's what we're here to discuss today. It's something that we're hearing, again, all across the north. Just last week, I talked about a young driver in Thunder Bay who is paying \$4,000 annually for his premiums, despite having a clean driving record. It's very clear that we have to do something. We have to act.

What we have is a service—auto insurance—which governments mandate is necessary to be able to drive, but nothing is being done to ensure that the rates that we're paying are fair. The last action that was taken on auto insurance, in 2010, was when the province dramatically reduced accident benefits. At the time, the government stated that this action may result in lower prices for the consumer, but what we instead saw was that the rates continued to climb.

What we also saw was the auto insurance industry profits rise too; they climbed. In 2010, profits for the industry were right around \$1 billion. The next year, after these changes took effect, insurance profits soared to \$3.4 billion. The current system has obviously made the industry profitable. Now it's time to pass some of those benefits on to the consumer—and consumers are fed up.

We, as legislators and those who mandate that people must pay for this service, have an obligation to ensure that there is a balance between the consumer's ability to access this mandatory service at a fair and reasonable cost and the company's ability to cover its costs. The balance has tipped significantly to one side, and we're saying that we need to have a level playing field.

In this House, we have spent a considerable amount of time discussing what we can do to create employment opportunities for young people, but what we neglected to consider is the fact that in many parts of the province, such as in the northwest, young people need access to a vehicle just to get to work, because they don't have the luxury of public transportation as an option. That means that they need access to a vehicle and, along with that, they need to have access to affordable insurance rates.

1720

Most young people entering the workforce are lucky if they can find a job that pays \$25,000 in my area of the province, but let's just say that they luck out and they find a job that pays \$40,000. If they're paying \$4,000 annually for auto insurance, as is the young man in Thunder Bay who I mentioned last week, that's 10% of their income that's gone. That's 10% that's gone before tax, before car payments, before groceries, before rent, before gas, before hydro. It's gone, and there's no reason for it. And it's not just youth. It's families, it's seniors, it's even businesses that rely on vehicles to carry out

their essential day-to-day activities. So whether it's getting groceries, going to the doctor or going to work, people all across the northwest are looking to this House, to members on all sides of this House, to take some concrete action on the issue.

By supporting this motion today, we can take the first step towards delivering this much-needed reduction, and I encourage all members on all sides of the House to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to stand in the House today to speak to the opposition day motion brought forward by my colleague the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

Let me begin by stating that I'm pleased that the member opposite has brought forward a reworked version of his private member's bill. I think we can all agree there are challenges when it comes to insurance in this province, and we need to work together to find workable solutions.

Like the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton—we both represent a community that has some of the highest car insurance rates in the province. People in our community are like people in communities across the province. They use their car to get to work. They use their car to get their kids to school. They use their car to get to medical appointments and to visit their elderly parents or grandparents. For many in my community, having a car is not a luxury. It is a necessity closely tied to their livelihood.

Since car insurance is mandatory, families who want their children to drive must find the funds to allow them to drive to those locations. As a mother of three sons, I know a little bit about how expensive car insurance can be, and I know what the smell of a burning clutch is like with three sons. I know first-hand the impact of high auto insurance rates, and I know that it's hard on hard-working families. It's a very high cost that you need to find a way to address. That's why I welcome the debate on how to address these challenges.

I want to also acknowledge today the work of my colleague from Mississauga-Brampton South, who—I think it was a year ago in this House—proposed a bill aimed at addressing insurance rate premiums through fraud prevention. One of the explanations insurance companies use when they are asked about the reason for high insurance rates is fraud. I think it was about a year ago that I held a town hall with residents of my community from a variety of sectors, and we brought in people from the insurance sector. We talked about all the reasons for fraud. It was a very lively meeting; we got lots of advice. I think that it helped inform many conversations I had, and certainly I heard about it in the last election. I think on almost every street, at every door or every second door I knocked at, people were talking about the high cost of insurance and what we were doing to address it. Like the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, it's something our community shares as a whole.

The insurance industry estimates fraud to be nearly a billion-dollar business in Ontario and raising insurance rates for all drivers. Fraud can take different forms. According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada and FSCO, forms of fraud include higher-than-necessary claims in minor accidents when there's no actual damage to the vehicle. There are also those unnecessary medical services that are claimed, and in some instances claims are made for treatment that is never actually rendered. There are even instances of staged accidents, concocted solely to make an illegitimate claim.

Clearly, based on the debate that we've heard this afternoon, there's a realization from at least two out of the three parties in this House that we need to explore options around insurance premiums in Ontario.

I'm proud to be part of a government that has already taken strong action on auto insurance rates. Back in September 2010, we introduced a package of 41 reforms that began to stabilize the rates, bring them down, and we attempted to crack down on fraud. These reforms mean that more dollars go to accident victims rather than assessment and transaction costs. These changes make the system more affordable, especially for those nine million Ontario drivers who never make a claim.

But that's not all we did. We created the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force back in 2011. The task force has been focusing on prevention, detection, investigation and enforcement, as well as consumer education. According to the anti-fraud task force, fraudulent activity—in particular, premeditated and organized fraud—has been on the increase, especially in the GTA.

We've also established a health claims for auto insurance database. This database will help us to detect potentially fraudulent activity, as well as new rules to ensure that consumers are actually receiving the treatments invoiced by health care clinics and other providers.

We know now that our plan is working. Since 2003, rates have risen at a slower pace than inflation. At the same time, Ontario has the most generous basic medical and rehabilitation benefits in Canada. That matters when you have an accident, knowing that you have a good system that will take care of you should you be injured.

While I'm proud of our record to date on car insurance, I am mindful that more can and should be done.

That brings us to today's motion. Premier Wynne has stated from the very beginning of her leadership that we will work to find common ground with the opposition. We will find ways that we can put our differences aside and focus on what's best for Ontarians. Private members' business, I've always believed, and certainly opposition day motions, are extremely valuable tools. They help us debate and raise public awareness regarding issues that affect all our citizens and our residents. I believe in those two tools. I believe that they provide all members of the Legislature an opportunity to bring forward suggestions on how to improve what we do, as well as government business. It isn't always used for that purpose, but in this instance, for this motion, I think it's a helpful method to have this important conversation about auto insurance.

As Premier Wynne has stated, we want to work with the third party on this issue, but we also need to work with the industry. I strongly believe we need to get everyone working together—all stakeholders involved. From the insurance industry, to government, to the police, to the municipal governments, to health care providers: All of us need to come together to fight fraud, to help Ontario drivers through lower insurance premiums. We want to increase road safety by reducing the number of staged accidents. That's why we need to implement the recommendations of the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force: to make sure that wherever there is fraud in the system, we get rid of it, that we shine a light on that fraud, because it affects all of us.

Once we can successfully eliminate fraud, these savings can be passed on to premium holders. That will have an impact on insurance rates, especially in suburban areas like Brampton, where rates are higher because, according to the industry, instances of fraud are higher.

During the last election, in 2011, this was an issue, as I said, that I heard a great deal about at the door. People in my riding pay some of the highest premiums in the province. They don't think that's fair, and I agree with them; I don't think it's fair either. That's why I'm going to be supporting the motion today, and that's why we need to find better ways to lower those premiums for honest, hard-working individuals in communities like mine.

Let me be clear: Rates should be lower for individuals with a good driving record. That was one of the main problems with my colleague's previous attempt at this issue. In fact, I think the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton addressed that. He was trying to find solutions. We weren't able to arrive at it. I think certainly that bill raised awareness. It added some context and some colour to this issue that weren't being addressed. I think this is a much better motion. The private member's bill he brought forward on this topic last March was debated at length, certainly in the newspapers and on the media side. It wasn't exactly the right solution, and I think it had some unintended consequences that were pointed out by some very well-respected industry experts—Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the Ontario police association. But his attempt was good. It was an attempt to find a solution.

As we know, that original bill did not pass, but I'm encouraged that he went back to the drawing board. He's trying to find positive solutions, and he used those interceding months to have a conversation with people in the industry and to draft a more balanced motion that's here for our consideration today.

1730

I'm pleased to be part of this important debate today. I want that conversation to continue. I want it to continue with the industry; I want it to continue with municipal government, with health care providers and with all of the stakeholders who have any tie to how we can reduce premiums for our drivers across Ontario. As a result of the implementation of the recommendations of the anti-

fraud task force, we've seen some great results. I'm heartened by them, but I acknowledge there's more work to be done. We want to work with the third party and the caucus. We know that the cost of auto insurance can be a huge deterrent; we know that it's a burden for a lot of Ontarians and it's a worry for them. Those pocketbook issues matter. There are no easy solutions; I know that, and that's why we need everybody working together to find a workable solution.

I support the motion because we need to work with all of those industry executives, anybody in the insurance industry, and local municipalities. We need to work with police services and forces to make sure that auto insurance is affordable and is available to everybody across the province. So I'm happy to support the motion, and I thank the member for the opposition day motion and the discussion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. John O'Toole: I just want to recognize the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton and his initiative on this particular file. With respect to the genuineness is where it comes into question.

More importantly, to put things in perspective, here and now we have a coalition of the NDPs and the Liberals. If you think the rates are high, the last 10 years are by a government that said—the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing just claimed they've somehow recovered the system. They had 41 recommendations.

In fact, if you look at it carefully, they've pretty well destroyed the system. They have reduced SABS, which is the statutory accident benefits, which increases the amount of tort, which is the legal, in-the-court process. They did have a fraud task force report, but they've done nothing; they've come up with a few ideas of trying to document where it happens.

Putting it in perspective, I think it's true—as they've said, first of all, auto insurance is a mandatory product. That is a fact: You can't do anything. As she was suggesting, you could drive to the doctor and home—in my riding of Durham, you have to drive pretty well everywhere. We don't have as much transit as the urban areas like Brampton, or, for that matter, the city of Toronto. It's a mandatory product, so, in fact, you could say it's a tax. Because it's a mandatory product, the government has a role to keep it affordable, and as such, we're here because it's not affordable and we've had 10 years. And when the NDP were in, they completely blew up the thing; they had a no-fault system which they eventually cancelled.

I could put this to you: Yes, there's money in fraud. We agree with that. But if you really want to know what the strategy is to deal with this—and they said they wanted to work with all stakeholders—I would say this: The solution was outlined today by the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London, Mr. Yurek. What he said was, in fact, the case. As the member from Conestoga said, it wasn't cheap, cynical, populist pandering. Quite honestly, with all deference and respect to the member and to

the people here listening to the debate, auto insurance has been an issue for many years. It's not as simple as cutting it by 15%. If you cut it, there will be no insurance—nobody will write the insurance. The industry tells you all the time, if you look at facilities in Ontario as one example, you have to have insurance, basically, to have a job.

I can't for one moment believe that the NDP and the Liberals have formed a coalition to defraud the people of Ontario on a product that's mandatory, and they already have the tools—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would suggest that the member withdraw the fact that he's saying that the NDP and the Liberals are defrauding the people of Ontario.

Mr. John O'Toole: With all due respect, I withdraw that.

They have ignored the requirements of keeping a product cheap and affordable, and that's the whole responsibility of the government in regulation. What they've done is unconscionable. They have not dealt with the issue of defining catastrophic injury. They have taken no firm action on dealing with fraud. They have made the product more expensive. In fact, the NDP—I'm surprised they're working together—recognized that they gave the insurance companies a big boost in income, as far as they're concerned; that's the NDP's argument, and the Liberals now are agreeing with them. So we have it very clear, there is a coalition. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it's my conclusion that Ontario is now made up of a two-party system: the Liberals and the left-sided Liberals, and Tim Hudak, the government that could actually bring sensibility back to Ontario.

I would say insurance will not be solved by this resolution or in the budget. It's an attempt to keep the keys to the office of government, nothing more than that. I go back to the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, where he said that it's cheap, cynical, populist pandering. That is the lowest form. Once upon a time, the NDP had values and traditions that they stuck to.

I'm appealing to all of the people to realize what's being done to them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's been an interesting debate, and it's a pleasure to actually stand up in support of this motion. There's been some talk about the value of a motion. Do you know what motions do? They bring issues to this place, where we can discuss them, where we can debate them, where we can raise awareness of them. The people of this province are well aware that auto insurance rates are too high.

To hear the PCs talk about populist pandering—they're quite mistaken, in fact. What we have done is we've actually gone out and listened to the people of this province. We've listened to how hard it is to make ends meet. It is popular, though. Do you know why it's popular? Because families need it; drivers need it. They recognize that auto insurance rates keep going up, the

profit margins of insurance agencies and organizations keep going up, and it is not fair. So actually, what we're trying to do in this House is get results for Ontarians.

I understand that the PCs don't understand that you have to come to this place and get results for people. As we've heard from the member from Timmins—James Bay, all that we've heard from that side of the House is no—no to the throne speech, no to the budget that you haven't even seen. Yet here we are over here, bringing the real voices of Ontarians to this place; absolutely.

You know what's also very interesting? What's really interesting is that we all agree.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, no, no, we all agree that auto insurance rates are too high. We agree on that. The PCs have no plan. The Liberals have a plan that's not working. This motion will accelerate the conversation that we need to have about insurance rates. This motion will get action, which people in this province deserve—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oxford might want to return to his seat if he wants to make outbursts, and the member from Lanark might want to cut it back a bit.

Continue. Thank you.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

What's really amazing is that a lot of the terms that the PCs have used—"bumper sticker politics"—if the auto insurance rates continue to rise in this province, people won't be able to afford bumpers; there's no way. Auto insurance rates are hurting businesses. They're hurting families. All that we want for drivers is a fair deal.

As I mentioned, the importance of a motion is that it brings it to this House, to this conversation. When you go out in the community—and if you were truly listening to the needs of Ontarians, just as the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton—thousands of people came out. They are outraged. You have an enraged populace that is so tired of being used and abused. They want a party to stand up for them, they want the people in this House to work for them and they want results. That is what we are doing in this party.

You have to think back a little bit. When the Liberals introduced the statutory changes, Finance Minister Dwight Duncan said at the time—this was back in 2010, with \$2 billion in profits for the insurance agencies—"I believe that is something that will be very good for consumers." But it hasn't been. The savings have not been passed on to the citizens, not just the consumers, but the citizens of this province. They've been waiting and they're getting impatient. What can happen here in this minority government setting, the potential and the power of a minority government, is that we can actually move; we can get results. We can get real results for the people of this province.

1740

It's a very simple motion; it's very workable. In finance committee, where I sit with Mr. Prue, we are going

to be making sure that, if this motion does pass in this House, your words are translated into action—because when you follow the money, you follow the real priorities of any government. We are going to be watching very carefully in the finance committee. And you know what? This will be a strong signal that real action may actually happen throughout that process.

It's very simple, though. It's within your power as a government to direct the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, FSCO, to bring the average Ontario auto insurance premiums down by 15% by the end—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, the Speaker is at his limit. There is going to be removal soon. We've got 17 conversations going on. I can't even hear the member at the back. Last warning to everyone: Quiet.

Continue.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So let's just talk a little bit about numbers, because everyone is throwing out a lot of numbers here. Let's think of the benefits that this motion could have. In 2011, the first full year after the benefit cutbacks, the overall annual rate change for premiums approved by FSCO was an increase of 4.83%. This compares with increases of 6.18% in 2010 and 8.77% in 2009. Those rates keep going up. So you can't say that you're making progress. You can't say that a plan is working when it isn't, because the numbers tell the real story.

I also want to remind this House that the NDP actually initiated an all-party legislative committee to look at all aspects of the auto insurance system and to come up with creative solutions to bring premiums down for all Ontario drivers regardless of where they live. But just as the committee began to develop its final recommendations, the government pulled the plug on the committee by proroguing this Legislature, and the committee had to wait. Once again, we are playing catch-up for prorogation. We need to get real results. This motion will signal to the people of this province that we are serious about the rising costs of family—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I guess you didn't take me seriously. I'm telling you, the next outburst, the person is gone—the next one, and there's a crucial vote coming up. Last warning.

Continue.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a final note, I just want to say to the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton, his determination, his commitment to getting real results—the values of this motion are in line with us as a party, and it is time for this House to actually address auto insurance rates in a real and tangible way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to very sincerely congratulate the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton and the New Democratic Party for bringing this forward. I

think this is a very positive idea and deserving of the support of all parties in this House.

I just want to say briefly, when Premier Wynne was elected leader of our party, I think there was a very clear commitment from all of us that we wanted to do business in this House in a different way. For us, it was a change in approach and an enhancement of direction, that we should be less partisan, that we should focus more on collaboration and we should create more opportunities in this House for individual MPPs, regardless of their party, to bring forward good ideas and see them brought forward in law.

I think we've had 20 or 30 years of too much partisanship in this House, and you will see a very strong turnout from my colleagues on the government side in support of this bill. This is more than simply a statement of support of the bill; it's meant to be—and I've said this on several occasions in the last three weeks—yet another message to our friends in the opposition that we have a huge amount of regard and respect for you and that we want to work for you, not just to pass this motion today, but to see this brought forward as legislation so that it can actually be added upon.

I hear these conversations about populist pandering. I mean, really. If there are 107 Ontarians who have no right to talk about populist pandering, it's the 107 of us. We can all be accused of populist pandering. I've heard the NDP talk about Windsor and London like there are no other parts of the province, and they are very free about calling us politically opportunistic. I won't even start with the official opposition and populist pandering, because I think they've almost made it an art form. If we just had a little humility—that we're all politicians and we all want to get re-elected, but we also all came here with a higher calling, which is trying to make a difference.

I believe that my friend from Mississauga—Brampton South has worked very hard, as has the member for Bramalea—Gore—Malton. They're neighbours. They also know that fraud is a problem in their community, and they also know that rates are too high.

I think this is a really great day. I am not going to take any shots at anyone today. There isn't a party in power here that hasn't had a scandal or two. There isn't a party in power here that hasn't had a few major screw-ups in their time, and we could all spend our time—or, Mr. Speaker, we could do that.

I would ask, because I think the third party has been working to try and be collaborative: Could we stop playing the games of not voting for a supply bill like it's a kindergarten class and saying, "We're not going to vote for a budget that we haven't seen"? If they're really serious about collaboration—because I've heard members opposite say they want to collaborate—there's a huge opportunity here to do it.

We have gone through some very exciting conversations in this House, and they are resulting in real action. You'll see in the budget—a budget that has the fingerprints of many members in this House, not just members

on this side of the government. Maybe it's because it's the first time that our party realized that if women are going to lead, sometimes men have to follow. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, I've run against New Democrats and I've run against Conservatives. I never, ever, want to run against Liberal women again. They are the toughest opposition I have ever had.

To my friend from Durham, I want to say: I cut taxes by 11% when I was mayor. I cut the debt in half of my city government. There's lots of stuff we can work on together. God bless. Take care.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join my colleagues on the NDP side of the House to add some reason to this debate and to infuse, I guess, that what people are demanding from us as elected officials are some measures of affordability coming out of this building, some inkling that we understand the pressures that are faced, particularly in regions that are heavily concentrated with drivers.

I stand in this House hearing another narrative from the Conservatives attacking drivers. We presented a case last year that would have frozen the price of gas at the pump to save drivers some money. The Conservatives voted against it.

I am pleased to see here today that, finally, some rationale and some reason is being used on the government side to understand that this issue around insurance is one that needs to be addressed today. I've heard the issue around small business. We understand the nature of small business. This is going to help small businesses in a way that I think is a tangible effort on the part of this government and on the part of this Legislature.

I commend my colleague, my friend from Bramalea—Gore—Malton, for having the courage, despite all the challenges and negativity lobbed against him, to continue to pursue this issue and to fight to get results for the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Singh has moved opposition day number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members, take your seats, please. Thank you.

Mr. Singh moves opposition day number 2. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Balkissoon, Bas
Berardinetti, Lorenzo

Duguid, Brad
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy

McNeely, Phil
Miller, Paul
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza

Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Campbell, Sarah
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Craiton, Kim
Damerla, Dipika
Dei Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri

Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted

Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 60; the nays are 33.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Timmins-James Bay yesterday had given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

The member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm just going to watch the exodus here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Timmins-James Bay has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

You will know that in this House I asked the Minister of Northern Development and Mines a question yesterday, and it was a very simple one. During the last

leadership campaign, we had a number of leadership candidates who went around northern Ontario trying to garner votes from the people of the north and said that they were prepared to revisit the question of the privatization of the ONTC. In fact, a number of those candidates went as far as saying there should be a pause on the privatization of the ONTC.

We know that's what was said during the leadership campaign, but what's clear is that northerners have been saying to this government since last year that we think privatization is the wrong way to go. We don't see, for example, the government moving to privatize GO Transit. That would be a wrong-headed idea. If you tried to privatize GO Transit, I would argue that would be the wrong thing to do. But this government, for whatever reason—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm just wondering when that conversation is going to end.

I was just saying, if you take a look at what northerners have been saying from the beginning, they have been saying that it's important that we not only have a discussion between northerners and this government about how we can make the ONTC work, but we also said that what's important is that the government give some time for that process to work.

Nobody in northern Ontario expects that we'll be able to find a solution to the issues at ONTC in a couple of seconds. We understand there are challenges. You're trying to run a rail system across a vast geography of northeastern Ontario with a very small population; thus it's going to cost money to be able to run it. For over a hundred years, governments in this province have understood that there's a role for the provincial government, because it was an agency set up by the crown to fund this particular organization by providing a means of subsidy. Now the government says, "Oh, subsidization is bad. We're wasting a lot of money spending money on the ONTC." Well, you don't see anybody in northern Ontario saying we should stop giving a subsidy to GO Transit. We give \$500 million a year to GO Transit, and people in northern Ontario say rightfully so. We don't argue for minutes when we see money being transferred to other organizations and other transit organizations across this province in order to support cities like Toronto, Hamilton, Oshawa, Ottawa and others. We say rightfully so. The only thing that we want the government to do is to treat us as the same class of citizens, as everybody else in this province is treated. We're asking for the government to treat northern Ontario no different than anybody else.

So we say we agree with the former Premier and we agree with the former minister of the treasury to look at, are there better ways of running the ONTC? The truth is, governments over the past number of years have not allowed the ONTC to run the way that it should in order to lessen its reliance on the subsidy and at the same time provide a better service. So we said, let the north rise to

that challenge. Let's put together a group of people—not just mayors but mayors, people that work on the rail, that take the passenger rail service, or used to take it, people that are shippers, people that are part of the ONTC family of services—and put those people on a committee to say, how can we run this organization in a way that we can increase the revenue? And give us the proper amount of time to do that.

What New Democrats have called for—John Vanthof, my good colleague from south of me, Timiskaming—Cochrane, and Andrea Horwath and other New Democrats—is to put this entire process on pause and give us an opportunity as northerners to look at what can be done to get the ONTC running the way that it should. We thought for a little while that there was a chance that that was going to happen. I had conversations with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, along with Mr. Vanthof and Mr. Mantha; we had conversations with the Minister of Infrastructure; and there seemed to be a bit of a willingness to push the pause button. We were expecting at one point that the government might actually announce that they would do what we had asked them to do. And we would have stood in this House and we would have said, “Job well done.” Because all the north wants is an opportunity to be part of the process to be able to find the solutions. We don't want to be told by Queen's Park, we don't want to be told by this provincial government what's best for us. We want to be able to have the destiny in our own hands to come up with some of the solutions.

So I say to the government again, and I say to the minister across the way, we're asking for two things. We're asking that a proper committee be set up in order to study this issue of how we can make the ONTC a better organization as a public entity, and to do so we're asking you to press the pause button. Only by pressing the pause button will we have the time to be able to do what needs to be done. I think most people in northeastern Ontario would be pretty happy if you did so. So I ask the government again, will you press the pause button and stop the privatization in its tracks?

1810

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines has up to five minutes to respond.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much. I appreciate the support beside me—the Attorney General's here with me—and my colleagues from the New Democratic Party caucus. Thank you for the opportunity to respond.

I do understand what an important issue this is for everyone in northeastern Ontario. I was up in North Bay on Monday—as you know, we formed our ministerial advisory committee—and I certainly saw the signs, I talked to the people and I recognize how important this is. May I say, we do indeed understand how important the ONTC is, obviously, as a transportation and telecommunications business and agency in northeastern

Ontario. We are committed to making sure we indeed put in place or keep in place a sustainable ONTC and a sustainable transportation system.

The reality is—and my good friend from Timmins—James Bay referenced it in part of his remarks leading up to this—that indeed with the ONTC we have seen an agency, over the last 10 years, that has received increasing dollars going into it from a government point of view—increasing almost every year going up from 2003—but also one where the revenues have not kept pace with that and obviously the business lines have not been as successful as we think they could be.

One of the interesting parts of the discussion that we had on Monday with the ministerial advisory group that I put in place—and I think it's a really good one. May I say that it was Premier Wynne who asked me, as minister, to do this, to truly find a way to listen to northerners. I will not speak very much about the past in the sense that the decisions that were made were tough decisions, but moving forward I believe we can find a way to make the right decisions for how can we see that the ONTC, in the form it takes potentially, obviously with private sector partners, can be one that can be a better system.

The fact is that, ultimately, there's no question we need to make sure that the business lines that are in place, and the services that are provided, need to be maintained. We need a transportation strategy in northeastern Ontario—in fact, all across northern Ontario—that makes sense for northerners, that speaks to the economic viability, the economic opportunities that are there in the north.

So the committee that's being set up—perhaps if I have enough time, I'll mention the members: President Al Spacek from FONOM, Mayor Al McDonald from North Bay, Tom Laughren from Timmins, Nina Wallace from Englehart—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Great people.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: They're all great people—and representatives from industry. Obviously the shippers and First Nations representatives: Chief Isadore Day from Serpent River First Nation, France Picotte from Métis Nation of Ontario.

We're asking them to absolutely give us the kind of advice to make sure that the criteria are put in place that meet the standard that people in northeastern Ontario would expect, and certainly our government expects, in terms of making sure that if we do privatize—and as you would know, all of you across the way here, it's not necessarily in opposition to privatization; it's making sure we protect the service and protect the jobs.

It is interesting that even in terms of the Ontario telecommunication proposal that went out, we released the RFP a couple of days ago and a very significant part of the criteria was their plans for sustainable employment, their service continuity and their investment in northern Ontario, up to about 60%—you take those two pieces.

What we're saying to the group that we are asking to help advise us is, one of the key elements will be, "You will be helping provide us with the criteria by which we will set the standard for what future proposals will go out there for an RFP, potentially, for privatization. In other words, these are the standards which we need to meet. We need to make sure that these services are provided."

Listen, I can't believe that I'm running out of time and I'm sure you felt the same way when you were speaking. There are so many other aspects of this. I say this with the greatest sincerity: We are very genuine about the fact that this ministerial advisory committee is one that's going to be providing the kind of advice that will be very,

very useful in making sure that indeed what comes next will actually provide the services in northeastern Ontario. People expect those standards. We're going to commit to that. We're going to work hard on that. Certainly I look forward to working with my colleagues on any advice you give me. I appreciate the advice you gave me today. Thanks so very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no further matters to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. Therefore, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1815.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Thursday 28 March 2013

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Jeudi 28 mars 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 28 March 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 28 mars 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 26, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: As always, it's an honour to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming-Cochrane, and most of the time I say it's also a pleasure. But on this bill, it's not a pleasure. It's a duty, because the air ambulance act is being portrayed as something that's going to fix the problems at Ornge. It's also a bellwether, if things are going to be fixed across not only the health care sector but across a lot of government agencies.

I'd like to really start this morning by saluting—thank—ing—the front-line workers at Ornge, the front-line workers across our whole health care spectrum, the people who actually save lives and the people who have to work in incredibly tough conditions and hard conditions. Some of those conditions were actually created by the people who ran systems like Ornge. The front-line workers are, in an odd sort of way, being side-swiped by the scandal that is Ornge.

I'd also like to spend a minute thanking, once again, the people who for years have actually been trying to wave the red flag about Ornge, the people who for years have been trying to blow the whistle; people like Trevor Kidd, whose family lives in my riding, who sat in this House in the members' gallery, who testified and who was widely praised for standing up and telling what he believed. But no one listened to Trevor Kidd for years.

If they had listened to people like Trevor, we could have stopped the waste of this money—or the govern-

ment could have stopped the waste of this money—years before and could have redirected that.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I don't believe we have quorum in the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can we check for quorum?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: For someone like Trevor Kidd, who banged the warning bells years ago, and if people had listened, if the government side had listened, we could have saved—would have saved themselves a lot of hassle and scandal, too—millions of dollars, and redirected that to home care or saving more people's lives or making people's lives better.

The problem, unfortunately—and again, once again, I'm going to go back to my riding a little bit. Trevor Kidd blew the whistle, and Trevor Kidd was persecuted for it. That, unfortunately—despite the government's assertions with G11, the Ambulance Act—that's not changing because, in my riding, as we speak, there are members of the community in a town called Iroquois Falls who are once again blowing the whistle. They want to make the health care system better, and what's happening? These people are raising their arms and saying, "There's something going on. We'd like it looked at." What's happening is, these people are being sued by the hospital board, funded through the LHIN and controlled under the Ministry of Health.

Has anything changed in regard to whistle-blower protection really? Because if you're sitting back and you know—because there are, and there will always be, regardless of who was running the show—the government is a big organization. There will always be problems. You're always going to have to keep your finger on the pulse of how things are working.

If you know something is going wrong and you're seeing that other people, when they say, "Okay, wait. There's something wrong here," and they're getting sued by public funds, is that an incentive to come forward and say, "Well, I think there's something wrong?"

An even bigger problem with this bill is if someone takes it upon themselves and takes the risk of being sued with public funds, who do they go to, because with the air ambulance act, you go to a government inspector. Well, from northern Ontario, first you'd have to go on a major search to find what you would call a government inspector. They're not in the blue pages.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Or the yellow ones.

Mr. John Vanthof: Or the yellow ones. So first, you have to break the confidence barrier that, okay, you know what? You might get sued. If you go to the press, you might get sued by public funds. So that's not really an option. So then your next option is to find, Speaker, a government inspector, so I guess Internet search, for those of us who have high-speed Internet in northern Ontario.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Not in my riding.

Interjection: Mine too.

Mr. John Vanthof: You can make a joke about it, but it's serious stuff. There is one name and one number that everyone trusts and that everyone can find. The one title that people identify with fairness, with objectivity, with impartiality—there's one name, regardless of what party you're from, regardless of where you're from, regardless of what your faith is, what your race is, how old you are, Speaker, and that is the Office of the Ombudsman.

0910

How many times: "I don't know where to go. I'm going to call the Ombudsman, because you know what? It's his job to be fair, and it's his job to look into the issues." And you know what? He's not going to look into every issue, because not every issue is a scandal. Not everyone is happy with the system, and that's the way the world works. But you need to be able to call the Ombudsman.

What's so glaring in G11, the Ambulance Amendment Act, is that the government, for whatever reason, has decided not to have Ombudsman oversight. Some things just defy common sense. Why wouldn't you? It's the one office everybody identifies with, even in northern Ontario. When I go home to Iroquois Falls or to New Liskeard, Kirkland Lake, Cochrane, I can walk down the street—walk down Railway Street in Cochrane—and ask people how many government investigators they know, how many they can find. A few of them will mention the MNR, that used to be around—that used to be around.

M^{me} France Gélinas: They're going.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes—but no one else. But they will know—not everyone on Railway Street in Cochrane will know the Office of the Ombudsman, but a lot of them will. That's why it's such a travesty that, for whatever reason, the government didn't take a common-sense approach and say, "You know what? There have been bad things happen at Ornge. People were persecuted at Ornge for actually bringing their views forward. How can we actually learn from this?" You know what? In my personal business, the way I got better is that when I made a mistake, I thought, "Gee, how come that happened? We're going to try to make sure that doesn't hap-

pen again somewhere else." The best way to do that in this case—not the only way, but the simplest way from the client side, which is the people using the health care system—is the Ombudsman.

On the New Democratic side, we're going to push, when this bill goes to committee, that it actually does something and that they include the common-sense thing: the thing that is right for Ontarians: that they include going to the Ombudsman, not just G11 but throughout the health care system. Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's a pleasure to rise in response to the comments from my colleague from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

I would like to remind the member that as soon as the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care heard about the issues at Ornge from the Auditor General, she immediately took action. She took strong action. She called in the Ontario Provincial Police; their investigation is continuing.

There has been acknowledgement on this side of the House of the problems at Ornge, but apart from the strong action that the minister took, of course, we first had Bill 50 and now Bill 11, which is before this House as we speak. Bill 11, as we heard yesterday at public accounts, does include many provisions that are extremely important and necessary to ensure that what happened at Ornge previously will never, ever happen again.

We have a very strong performance agreement. Pursuant to that performance agreement is the quality improvement plan. The new chief operating officer, Mr. Giguere, yesterday went through that quality improvement plan with us, setting out very clear targets for performance and his priorities of patient safety. He wants to see an effective system, with aircraft availability, paramedic availability at all times, at all bases, on call and available. He wants to see efficiency. He wants to see cost savings. He wants to see the Ontario taxpayer get maximum value for their investment in air ambulance.

Bill 11 contains many other important provisions, as we heard: the whistle-blower protection; the patient advocate. These are all important measures enshrined in this bill. I urge all members of this House to support it. Let us get it to committee to discuss it further.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: As I recall, we were raising problems at Ornge for two years before the government did anything. The minister did not take direct action; she took no action whatsoever. This bill has some serious flaws. This is a bill that closes the barn door firmly after the horses have left. In fact, the horses left so long ago that they now have offspring. Those offspring are coming to the track this spring, and I don't think they're going to do very well because they weren't very well bred.

This bill has some very difficult clauses in it. One clause gives the government the ability to alter contracts—signed, negotiated contracts. The government can

alter those contracts, and that gives me great pause, whenever the government gives itself that kind of power. It gives itself the power to take over certain aspects, regardless of signed contracts. Sometimes a takeover is necessary. The conditions that that takes over will be outlined in regulation. Those regulations can be very, very strong or they can be very fair. I would encourage this government to be very fair when they're writing those regulations—fair to the people of Ontario; fair to the contracts that they signed. If you sign a contract that you don't know anything about and it's a wrong contract, shame on you; don't make that mistake.

The other problem is the protection that they give whistle-blowers. Again, some of that protection will be reflected in regulation. If there's not someone to report to—this bill doesn't specifically say who they can report to, other than an inspector appointed after the problem is created—then the whole bill is a sham.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was really interested in what my colleague had to say. Basically, what happened at Ornge was 100% preventable. The ministry had had many whistle-blowers come to it and explain in great detail that the salaries they were paying themselves didn't make sense, that they had created a whole bunch of for-profits for the sole reason of shielding themselves from the ministry, that what was going on—there were kick-backs coming from deals that had been signed to buy new helicopters. Whistle-blowers told them that, years before it hit the front page of the *Toronto Star*. Step by step, whistle-blowers went to the ministry. But the ministry did not act.

Now they say, "We're going to give whistle-blowers protection." That is not worth the paper it's written on. Have no fear; Ornge has developed whistle-blower protection now, because they see the value. They saw what happened to their co-workers who are now out of a job because they blew the whistle on a real scandal, and what happened? Nothing happened at the level of the ministry, but those people paid the price. Those people lost their jobs, they lost their livelihood, and oftentimes their good names were thrown in the mud because they were telling the truth.

What we have in front of us, this bill, the whistle-blower protection that is in it, kind of makes sense in long-term care. It is part of the Long-Term Care Act. They copied it from the Long-Term Care Act and put it into the Ambulance Act, where it makes no sense whatsoever. I expect better than this from this government.

0920

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I think the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane provided some very valuable input this morning on Bill 11, the air ambulance act. I know he's always out consulting with his constituents, perhaps in the Tri-Town area of Cobalt, Haileybury and New Liskeard. I know he takes that opportunity frequently and

chats with them about what's going on in the riding and things down here.

I was just recently rereading Ted Sorensen's book about John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Edward R. Murrow, who was the great media leader in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, provided President Kennedy with great advice after the Bay of Pigs fiasco in 1961 when he said, "An error does not become a mistake unless you don't correct it."

So Bill 11 is an opportunity to correct what we all recognize: some very serious deficiencies in the operation of Ornge. We'll have the opportunity, through the committee process—and that was highlighted to us, something that we were reminded of during the period of prorogation: that committees weren't operating. There's an opportunity now to get Bill 11 to committee, an opportunity for witnesses and presenters to come forward, to provide input where changes should be made, and amend the legislation before it ultimately comes back to the House.

There are, in this bill, some new provisions: the new performance agreement; the new policies and procedures on conflict of interest; whistle-blower protection. We do know that we now have a new chief executive officer and a new chair of the board.

But I think the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane made some great points today, and I'm sure he—an opportunity to present them, debate them, when this bill goes to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): My apologies.

The member for Timiskaming-Cochrane, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the members from Oak Ridges-Markham, from Halton, my colleague from Nickel Belt and the Minister of Rural Affairs for their comments.

The member from Oak Ridges-Markham: The question isn't that the government stepped in when the Auditor General said something; the problem is, they didn't step in years before, when people on the front lines were saying something. That's the problem.

That's also the whistle-blower problem. There's only so long that people can blow the whistle, at risk of their jobs, at risk of their reputation. In the case of what's happening in Iroquois Falls, these people are just community members who are being sued by the hospital board because they said, "Excuse me; I think something's wrong here." They're being sued by the hospital board with funds from the LHINs, controlled by the Ministry of Health. And we're sitting here talking about how we've improved whistle-blower protection? I'm sorry; I have a big problem with that.

Something else I have a big problem with: We've debated this whole thing before. And then the government was prorogued and it comes back, and all the things that we said should be put in that would make it better—

they're not in here. So when the government was pro-rogued, they maybe could have sat down and think, "You know, let's improve these things so when we come back, we might actually get them fixed." But again, they didn't take that opportunity.

So yes, we want this bill to go to committee and we want it fixed so people like my constituents in Iroquois Falls don't have to go to bed at night living in fear because they're being sued by the government because they are saying, "Excuse me; something here is going wrong."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane raises a very common theme which I'll continue in my 10 minutes. It's an honour to rise in behalf of the residents of Dufferin-Caledon to discuss the government bill before us this morning.

Today, we are here debating Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance service, also known by its short title as the Ambulance Amendment Act. Bill 11 is, of course, the Liberal government's response to the situation at Ornge's deeply troubled air ambulance service, Ornge. If enacted, the bill would amend current legislation and install new powers that the government claims will better equip the ministry to deal with situations like what occurred at Ornge. For example, Bill 11 would allow providers of air ambulance services to be designated as designated air ambulance service providers. Cabinet would then be given the power to appoint provincial representatives to sit on the boards of these newly designated air ambulance service providers—can you say "LHINs"? The bill also empowers the minister to issue directives to these designated air ambulance service providers.

Bill 11 creates other new positions and ministerial powers which I will touch on shortly. However, first I would like to point out something that I think is quite startling and disturbing. When I sat down to prepare my remarks for this morning's debate, at first I thought I was mistakenly picking up Bill 50 from the last legislative session. I'm not kidding, Speaker. I began reading it and thought, "I've got the wrong bill here. This is Bill 50." I mean, it is virtually the same bill. As a matter of fact, every single word in the explanatory note of Bill 50 and Bill 11 is identical—not a single change.

Now, to be honest, if you would have asked me in January if the Minister of Health would reintroduce a bill on this important topic almost a full year later with little or no changes in it, I would have told you it's highly unlikely. I would have said then, Speaker, that given everything we've heard in committee since Bill 50 was introduced, it only seems logical to alter the bill to reflect all that we have learned over the past year.

It's actually kind of shocking if you think about it. Bill 50 was introduced for first reading in the last session on March 12, 2012. The bill we're debating here today, Bill 11, was introduced for first reading on February 26, 2013. So here we are, almost a full year later, and, much to my astonishment—and I'm sure many of my col-

leagues would agree—the Minister of Health introduces legislation almost identical to that which was introduced back in March.

Speaker, I'm not making this up. Actually, I'm quite shocked by it. Frankly, I'm almost at a loss for words. To think that the public accounts committee has spent hundreds of hours questioning dozens and dozens of people over the last year—and continues to do so, I might add—and yet, after all that, all the meetings, all the questions, the thousands of documents submitted to committee, the minister introduces the same bill a year later? You know, for a party that spends so much time promoting respectful conversations and working together, they sure don't listen very well.

I'd say maybe the Minister of Health is blessed with the gift of impeccable foresight, but then again, the whole Ornge debacle took place under her watch, so I suppose I shouldn't.

But what is the impression we get? Mainly, it's that Bill 50 was so perfect, so well-written, so flawless that it doesn't matter what all the witnesses, all the members in this chamber and all the experts have said about Ornge in the past year. This bill should simply be reintroduced, just about word for word.

Speaker, the fact that the minister who presided over the Ornge fiasco would have the audacity to disregard everything the opposition has had to say and everything that was presented in committee, and instead stands in this House and presents nothing new on this bill, is shameful. But then again, I suppose, what does the minister have to worry about? Despite the terrible mismanagement and shameful waste of taxpayers' money that occurred under her watch, the new Premier saw fit to promote the minister to Deputy Premier.

So here we are, almost a year after Bill 50 was introduced, and we have a carbon copy, Bill 11, before us to debate—although now that I think about it, I suppose the minister was preoccupied during prorogation in her role as co-campaign chair for the Premier's Liberal leadership race, so maybe that's why we didn't see any changes to the bill. She wasn't really focused on her ministry responsibilities.

The real shame is that Bill 11 fails to take any substantive action to prevent the problems which plagued Ornge from happening again. One of the reasons I am glad I got the opportunity to speak on Bill 11 today is because I think Bill 11 serves as yet another example as to why we need a change of government here in Ontario. Actually, that being said, there's a lot about this whole Ornge file that demonstrates why we need a change of government here in Ontario.

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Let's consider the Liberal government's reaction to the problems at Ornge. True to Liberal form, their remedy is more bureaucracy, more convoluted lines of responsibility, and in the process we get less accountability. I say this because what we've opted to do with Bill 11 is allow cabinet to appoint new special investigators and give the minister the ability to appoint new

supervisors to oversee operations. In addition to these measures in Bill 11, there is currently a new patient advocate position at Ornge that the government claims will add oversight.

Speaker, we already have a special investigator to provide oversight. You might know him? His name is André Marin—you know, the Ombudsman of Ontario? And we already have a supervisor to oversee operations at the air ambulance service. They're known as the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Article 15 of the original Ornge performance agreement gave the minister powers of investigation. She never used them. The minister also had the power to intervene under the Independent Health Facilities Act. She never used it.

So you see my point: Rather than listen to the members in the PC caucus, rather than listen to the members in the third party, rather than listen to the Ombudsman himself when he wrote to the minister on this subject, this Liberal government was content to simply recycle this year-old eight-page bill that provides no real change and is really just positioning on the part of the Minister of Health. If the minister was serious about providing substantial, meaningful reforms, she would have added Ombudsman oversight to her bill before reintroducing it in this session.

The Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Legislature, and as such, reports only to this legislative chamber and the people's representatives who serve within it—not the Minister of Health; not the Premier; we as legislators. The minister, however, thinks oversight duties are better handled by individuals who would be employees of Ornge itself and would report to Ornge management. As the Ombudsman outlines in his letter to the minister, which my colleague read into the record a few weeks ago, the new patient advocate position reports to an Ornge vice-president. Really? That's your idea of independence? Was it not the total lack of government oversight that allowed things to get so bad at Ornge in the first place? Speaker, this is a totally dysfunctional model. It's so outrageous it would almost be humorous if this service wasn't in place to save people's lives.

Dozens of brave whistle-blowers have come forward with the shocking and depressing details of the abuse that took place at Ornge, and they often did it in secret for fear of retaliation against them. It is because of these whistle-blowers' bravery that people like my colleague from Newmarket—Aurora were able to pressure the Liberal government into finally confronting this terrible scandal. Yet the minister's idea of protecting whistle-blowers is make them take their concerns to an individual who reports to Ornge management. Speaker, with reforms like this it's no wonder Ornge was allowed to spiral out of control, because clearly the minister has absolutely no understanding of proper oversight mechanisms. Why else would the ministry expect people who have issues with the way an agency is being run to report their concerns to the very people who run the agency?

In the job description that was posted publicly, the responsibilities of the newly crafted office of the patient

advocate states that the position will “investigate, resolve, document and report organization-specific patient and visitor compliments” and complaints. It's a little late for that, Speaker. We need to have Ombudsman oversight included in this bill for it to have any teeth at all.

With that, I will await the comments of the opposition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to comment on this bill, the ambulance bill, because I keep referring back to the Auditor General's report, where he quoted in February 2006 that the Ministry of Health committed to set standards to monitor performance. When you make a commitment, you don't abandon that commitment. She stated she is committed to standards and monitoring. This bill doesn't reflect that commitment that she made in 2006. So here we are, how many years later, and we are now in a problem that has been created by her non-committal of oversight to this ministry.

The member opposite who just spoke now—she's saying Ombudsman oversight is the way that the public will regain confidence and, in some small portion, some small way, will also reaffirm this minister's commitment to the public so that they can have the confidence in this service that we're supposed to be delivering as a government agency.

People shouldn't be questioning how a government agency operates so that they feel that perhaps that service isn't going to be delivered to them. All the fiascos, all the scandals that happened in management, were completely unacceptable and a disgrace to this ministry and a disgrace to me as a member here, having to discuss this bill and not having the minister listen to us expressing how important the Ombudsman is and how that's going to make things better for oversight.

When you make a mistake, as the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane says, you learn from those mistakes and you put in best practices so that those mistakes won't reoccur. When we're talking about life and death, Minister, it's crucial that those mistakes don't happen again.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm happy to speak again on this important piece of legislation. I've listened carefully to the comments from the opposition—both parties.

I just want to reiterate what I've talked about before, and why we have reintroduced this piece of legislation: It is to respond to the concerns that I'm hearing. It is to provide substantial oversight in government.

This legislation appoints special investigators or a supervisor when it's in the public interest to do so. It appoints members to Ornge's board of directors. It prescribes terms of the performance agreement between the government and Ornge in regulation. It provides whistle-blowing protection for staff who disclose information to an inspector, investigator, supervisor or the ministry. Ornge will be subject to retroactive freedom-of-informa-

tion requests, a change that we are undertaking through regulation.

I want to set the record straight, Speaker. The official opposition, the PC Party, voted against Bill 50. They voted against the kinds of things they're talking about today that are important: oversight, transparency, whistle-blower protection, improvements that will help pilots and paramedics. So I say to both opposition parties: Let's get this to committee, as the Minister of Rural Affairs said, work on changes and amendments, hear from witnesses and move it forward.

I think we're all really wanting the same kinds of things, and we're starting to debate this a bit ad nauseam, quite frankly. I think it's time to get this bill to committee, work on it and respond to the concerns that are being raised, and implement the very strong oversight and governance provisions that are articulated here in this bill. It's an important piece of legislation, so let's work together and move this forward to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to join in the debate. I certainly found the remarks made by my colleague the member for Dufferin–Caledon to be ones that were clear in the process and clear in the condemnation of the government's lack of action.

When you think back to the early days when the brown envelopes started coming, when the phone calls and things that demonstrated the fact that there were some fundamental issues that were not being addressed by Ornge and by the government's response to those, when I think about aircraft that were ordered and provided that were too heavy, that didn't have the ability to fly as far as they should—they had interiors that prevented the appropriate response to patients. You don't get more fundamental than this.

It's shocking, not only that it was done, but the fact that there had been an air ambulance service in this province that worked behind the scenes to support people throughout the province and had been doing it for generations. All of a sudden, the government gives a virtual monopoly to a company that can't even figure out what the plane should look like. This is shocking in itself. But it's the treatment of those who came forward—further shocking and irresponsible on the part of the government.

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Finally, when you look at the piece of legislation that we're looking at today, what does it do? It creates more bureaucracy, more regulation. What that does is it demonstrates to me—and the references have been made to other examples and pieces of legislation where the same thing is the process—is the inability of this government to recognize that you cannot legislate either morality or good judgment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's my pleasure to stand and actually add my comments to this debate. I really want to commend my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

He's really highlighting a very, very big part of the puzzle that is missing out of this, which is whistle-blower protection.

During my comments that I made last week, I tried to suggest one suggestion through my 20-minute comments that I was making, to really look at Ombudsman oversight and the importance of it.

But I want to touch on what my colleague had been talking about here this morning: whistle-blower protection. Him standing in this House and being so passionate about what's going on in his riding back home to his constituents and the failure of this government to listen to those views—and I heard from one of the members across the way that we want the same things. Well, if you want the same things, you have to be listening to the message in order to accomplish those. The message here is, we're missing substantial oversight out of this budget. We're missing Ombudsman oversight and we're missing transparency. Everything that you've created through this bill is exactly what we had been talking about and is not in this bill.

So I stand and I commend my colleague by highlighting the issues that he has challenged, because maybe, just maybe, if we talk about it long enough, you're going to actually recognize that this is missing out of this bill, and maybe someone from the other side of the House will actually say, "Hey, you're right. You have a point. We have not looked at this. Maybe we should be looking at Ombudsman oversight."

The bigger question for me sitting here is, why not? Why isn't the Ombudsman looking at this? He's our gold standard of all this, of what's going on. So why haven't we been doing this? That's what I'm concerned about, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Dufferin–Caledon, you have two minutes for a response.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Ultimately, there is nothing of substance that is going to change and improve what happened at Ornge to occur again.

What's that line from Albert Einstein? The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different outcome. You introduced Bill 50. You didn't listen to the changes that were being suggested. You've introduced Bill 11. It's identical. It is not going to improve the situation.

What we need is effective, responsible and independent oversight. We don't have it with this piece of legislation. You had an opportunity, actually, with the prorogation. You had almost a year to review the testimony within the committee. You had an opportunity in that year to review all of the comments that many of us already made on Bill 50, and you still ignored it. You still introduced the same old same old. This is another indication that there are no new ideas and there are no new changes happening on the other side of the House.

We need actual change. Bill 11 doesn't do it and the new front bench doesn't do it. I'm just really disappointed that we couldn't have offered something more sub-

stantive that would actually improve the lives of Ontario residents, the people in Dufferin–Caledon and ultimately, most importantly, the individuals who have to rely on that air ambulance service at their most important and critical time. Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: As I rise in the Legislature this morning to speak to Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services, I am mindful of the concerns of my constituents in Wellington–Halton Hills first and foremost. I also consider Bill 11 in the context of the high personal regard that I have for the Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

From speaking with two former Ministers of Health in the province of Ontario who are my friends, I know that being the Minister of Health is one of the most challenging jobs in government at any level. I believe it is more challenging even than being Premier. The complexity of the issues, the sheer volume of the work itself, and the need to ensure political accountability for the whole health care system are staggering. I do not envy the minister her responsibilities.

For my part, I'm glad to have what I consider to be an excellent working relationship with this Minister of Health. I appreciate the interest she has shown in Wellington–Halton Hills. She visited our riding just before the election, in August 2011, to announce up to \$2.6 million for the Georgetown Hospital's ambitious renovations, including an emergency room addition and a diagnostic image renovation project. Yes, we applauded the minister when she visited our riding to make that announcement. This project is now well under way. I drop by the hospital frequently to view its progress. I know that the hospital foundation is continuing to raise funds. I hope that the minister will be able to visit us again when the Georgetown Hospital celebrates the official opening of the new ER and CT scanner suite.

The minister was kind enough to visit Centre Wellington last December 6 to reaffirm the government's commitment to building a new Groves Memorial Community Hospital. We welcomed the minister and together unveiled a sign where the new hospital is planned to be built later on in this decade.

Mr. Speaker, I have always been willing to reach across the partisan divide in this House and work with members from other parties in the interests of my constituents. I've been here for 22 and a half years, and only eight of those years in government, so I guess my experience in many respects has been serving in opposition. You work with the government of the day to advance the issues that are of concern to your constituents. I believe that as members of provincial Parliament, we should demonstrate respect for each other and our mutual roles, as our constituents would expect.

Personal considerations aside, there are real political differences between our respective parties on many issues. In opposition, it is our responsibility to hold the government of the day to account, to point out the flaws

and drawbacks of its policies, to recommend constructive alternatives and to hold the government responsible for its actions. This we must do on Bill 11.

This government must believe in recycling; they have recycled themselves. Theoretically, there's a new provincial government, but the list of similarities between the McGuinty government and the Wynne government is long; the list of differences is hard to yet determine. In fact, the new Premier said that the reason she ran to be Premier was that she was so proud of the record of the McGuinty government. I was astonished to hear her make that statement on CBC Radio just after she was elected leader of the Liberal Party. Does she now regret making it? Perhaps, as she proceeds to attempt to turn the page and put her own stamp on the government's policy agenda.

I have said that the government appears to be in denial and oblivious to the significant economic challenges that the province faces today. Whether it's the jobs challenge—565,000 Ontarians are unemployed; the deficit challenge—the most recent estimate is \$11.9 billion; the rising provincial debt—\$258 billion; or the responsibility for cancelling the gas plants to save marginal Liberal seats that cost hundreds of millions of dollars, the provincial government carries on as if these problems don't even exist.

But they do believe in recycling, as I said earlier. In this House, they are recycling many of the government bills that were introduced last year by the McGuinty government but died on the order paper when the House was prorogued on October 15. Bill 11 is the recycled Bill 50. The government would have us believe that Bill 11 is the legislative solution to the Ornge air ambulance scandal. The minister wants us to believe that she has taken appropriate action to fix the problems in our air ambulance services.

We all know the sordid details. It is a shocking story of wasteful spending, lack of accountability, lack of transparency, and inadequate oversight. Every week, there seem to be more revelations coming out of the public accounts committee that command our attention and prolong the infamous saga. We also know that there is an ongoing police investigation. Bill 11, we're told by the government, is the solution. They say this even though the committee investigation continues and many questions remain unanswered.

Here are some of our caucus's main concerns. We say that there is little of substance in this legislation. This bill is simply a means of providing political cover for the government's failure to provide important leadership. Its biggest single weakness is that it perpetuates the existing structure of the air ambulance service rather than recognize that the structure is flawed and requires direct oversight by the Minister of Health. The bill plays lip service to whistle-blower protection but limits the scope of that protection. It fails to provide across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers. It imposes limits on which individuals are protected and who they can approach with that information.

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Instead, we say the legislation ought to provide for a formal process through the Ombudsman, which would ensure proper protection and follow-up. We say that the bill is an attempt to divert attention away from the fact that the minister has had the power to hold Ornge and its board accountable from the very beginning for the Ornge saga. The minister had the power to intervene at Ornge under article 15 of the original Ornge performance agreement, as well as the Independent Health Facilities Act. The government has never adequately refuted these facts, and these are some of the reasons we speak against Bill 11 in its present form.

My colleague the member for Newmarket–Aurora has been absolutely tenacious in holding the government to account for the problems at Ornge air ambulance. He deserves enormous credit for the work he has done to bring these issues to light.

Our Ontario PC health critic and deputy leader, the member for Whitby–Oshawa, is a respected voice in this House, and she has also offered a principled critique of the government's actions in this regard. On Monday of this week, she spoke at length to Bill 11 and in her remarks indicated that the Ornge air ambulance scandal has cost Ontario taxpayers at least \$300 million.

Health care spending scandals seem to be a specialty of this Liberal government. We are reminded of the eHealth debacle, where a billion dollars was spent with very little to show for it, as the Auditor General confirmed, other than Liberal-friendly consulting firms billing the government for questionable fees. Because of these repeated scandals and the stories that drag on and on, over and over again, I'm afraid to say that some have almost become inured to health spending scandals. We've become hardened; they don't faze us anymore, yet faze us they should. Every dollar wasted on eHealth or the Ornge air ambulance service is a dollar that should have and could have gone to front-line care for patients in Ontario.

Who in this House could not furnish, on short notice, a list of health care priorities that need funding in their ridings? I suspect that every single member could easily bring the Minister of Health a long list of funding priorities in their ridings which would present a noticeable improvement in health services for their constituents. We can all identify needed improvements in health care.

Let me tell you about one of those health issues which was recently brought to my attention. Madison Phipps is a 17-year-old girl from Georgetown. She has cystic fibrosis. Since she was born, she has spent more than 250 days in the hospital. Since becoming the MPP for Halton Hills in 2007, I have come to know Maddie's parents, Dr. Nigel Phipps and Shelley Phipps, through their community leadership and the numerous organizations which they support in Georgetown.

I won't go into the details of Maddie's treatment through the years, but suffice to say that she has courageously endured it all, and at the same time, she has maintained a sense of hope for the future. That hope has

not been misplaced. A new medication called Kalydeco has recently been approved by Health Canada. For some with cystic fibrosis, it promises to be almost a miracle cure. Cystic Fibrosis Canada says that Kalydeco is the first therapy that targets the underlying cause of CF. It helps to improve the function of the defective protein, leading to better lung function, weight gain and lower sweat chloride levels. For some CF patients, access to Kalydeco could lead to a longer, healthier life. Kalydeco shows the greatest promise for CF patients who have cystic fibrosis with something called the G551D mutation.

Kalydeco, at present, is prohibitively expensive. It is estimated that the drug would cost \$294,000 a year. No family could afford that, but isn't that why we have a public health care system? Just before Christmas, I emailed the minister's office to ask for her help on this. Her staff got back to me and informed me that the drug's manufacturer, Vertex Pharmaceuticals, had made a submission, which was before the Canadian Drug Expert Committee. This committee is responsible for making recommendations to provincial and territorial drug plans.

When the House resumed sitting on February 20, I spoke to the minister personally, informing her of this issue and asking for her help. I followed up again last week, on March 20, reminding her of Madison Phipps and the need to expedite consideration of funding for Kalydeco.

We learned just this week that the Canadian Drug Expert Committee has recommended Kalydeco to be listed on the formulary listing of publicly funded drug plans for the treatment of cystic fibrosis in patients age six and older who have the G551D mutation. Now it's up to the minister to act and make Kalydeco accessible to CF patients. I urge her to do so without delay so that patients like Maddie can have access to this life-saving drug.

Going forward, if the government gives greater attention to eliminating wasteful spending through better oversight and more effective accountability, then precious health dollars can go to life-saving patient care instead of being wasted on what the Ombudsman calls the "maladministration horrors that have plagued Ornge."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to stand here and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane and comment on the remarks of the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

I listened carefully to his remarks, and he made some very good points about how the money that was wasted in the Ornge scandal and in others could have been put to much better use in the health care system. He commented on how each of us would have examples of how money could be spent in all of our ridings to make people's lives so much better.

I listened very intently as he remarked on a case. We all have cases in our ridings, but his in particular—how one person's life could be made so much better, and how

sometimes people's lives get caught up in bureaucracy and caught up—and we're here. We're here, in those cases, to try and be their voice, because we're most effective, all of us, the 107 of us, when we give people a voice who don't have a voice any other way.

I'd really like to commend the member from Wellington-Halton Hills for being the voice for that family, and I would like to add my voice, to hope the minister acts and helps that family, because he did his job and he is bringing that little girl's plight to the House today. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I have great respect for the member from Wellington-Halton Hills. We had the opportunity the other day to get a picture with the Queen of the Furrow, from Wellington county. I know the member and the member from Perth-Wellington availed themselves of the opportunity to have a chance to chat with a fine young lady who will do very well.

We're all touched this morning. The member brought forward a particular case in his riding with a young lady. All of us on all sides of the House, of course, will do what we can, with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. When there are new advances in medicine for citizens across the province of Ontario, it's a non-partisan issue. All of us want to make sure that people have that access.

He touched upon eHealth. I just want to share a story about eHealth and how progress is being made in eHealth. Just before Christmas, an individual in Lindsay, Ontario, had a stroke. The individual was transferred from Ross Memorial Hospital in Lindsay to the Peterborough regional health care centre because we have the regional stroke trauma centre. During that period of time, through eHealth, they were able to do a CAT scan in Peterborough, immediately send it to McMaster health centre in Hamilton, Ontario, where the neurologist, through eHealth, electronically was able to read the CAT scan of this individual and was able to prescribe a regimen of approaches to help this individual. Two days later, that individual was discharged from PRHC in Peterborough back to Lindsay, Ontario, and is on the road to recovery. That just indicates to me the advances that we're making in all areas of medicine in the province of Ontario, and all of us want to support that.

I say to the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, we wish his resident all the very best to get access to that drug to improve that individual's life—something that, on all sides, we want every day in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Perhaps the minister will speak to the Minister of Health and encourage her to support that request.

The member for Wellington-Halton Hills made very interesting comments. His speech was well laid out. First, he established his credibility and how he serves his constituents and how he works with the government. He

expressed his concerns about the direction that the government is taking on this particular bill. Then he brought into the debate the impact that this drug could have on his constituent.

I know this child; I know the family, I know the parents and I know the grandparents. They're good friends. This is something that they're very excited about. This could change this child's life.

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I would point out to this government that since they've been in government for the past nine and a half years, they have increased the debt of this province. This drug, costing \$294,000 per year, could be supplied if this government hadn't increased the debt. Just this government's debt—six hours of interest would pay for this drug for one year. That's what your debt, that's what your irresponsible spending in this province has created. It has created a situation where we look at \$300,000 a year, more or less, as to whether or not we can afford it; but it's only six hours of interest that this government has increased the debt of this province by. I say, shame on you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I was listening to the member from Halton Hills and how concerned and passionate and compassionate, I should say, he is about this family's plight and this little girl's health issue. My heart goes out to the family. I hope that the Minister of Health will listen to the member from Halton Hills.

I know in all our ridings, there are those stories where people come to us and they're looking for help because there are things in the health care system that they can't access or there isn't access to. That's something that we need to look at and review, because when those things happen to a family it devastates all of us, and we feel helpless. We're here to try to make things better.

When we talk about Bill 11, and we talk about making things better, there is one thing that the government put in there, which was the freedom of information so people can get that information. That's one good thing that's in the bill, and it's a positive thing to see.

But we do talk about the Ombudsman, and today we talked about the importance of that oversight and how that's going to make a difference to people when they feel that there's unfairness or, perhaps, help they couldn't get. This is an outlet. An ombudsman is a way for people to have that serious concern heard, and perhaps the Ombudsman can investigate if there were issues around what happened to them with regard—we're talking about Ornge.

But I also want to take the time today to say thank you to those front-line workers who came forward from Ornge and made their voices heard—but, of course, the government didn't listen. Their work is appreciated. I know they work really hard. All the things that they do are to make sure that Ontarians do receive the best health service that they can deliver.

I just want to say that my thoughts are with the family from the member for Halton Hills' remarks, and I look

forward to this bill going to committee so that we can talk about how the Ombudsman is so important for oversight.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Wellington—Halton Hills, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I must say I really appreciate the responses of all of my colleagues to my remarks this morning. The member for Timiskaming—Cochrane, thank you very much. He is absolutely right, and I'm sure he has numerous examples in his own riding of constituents with health care needs. Obviously, he's absolutely correct, and that was the point of my speech: When we waste precious health care dollars, when we're not paying attention to proper oversight, when there seems to be little regard for waste and nobody seems to care, we're taking money away from front-line patients. We should care; we should care about that, and we need to make greater efforts in that respect.

I want to thank the Minister of Rural Affairs for his kind comments. Certainly we would appreciate his support within the cabinet on this issue. We very much appreciated having the opportunity to meet his relative, who is the Wellington county Queen of the Furrow, earlier this week. It was very kind of him to invite us to do that, and I thank him.

I especially want to thank my friend and colleague the member for Halton for his comments. Yes, he has been well acquainted with the Phipps family for many years. In fact, I spoke to him this morning and consulted with him in his office before, while I was working on my remarks, to seek his advice. Again, I appreciate very much his support, because on many of these issues, these are nonpartisan issues, and we should be willing to work together to ensure that they are resolved.

I also want to thank my friend the member for London—Fanshawe for her kind comments. Again, this shows, I think, an indication that this should be considered a non-partisan issue. It's unfortunate; sometimes we do need to bring the issues forward in the Legislature to draw public attention to them, to ensure that they're not shuffled by the wayside. I would again ask the Minister of Health to do whatever she can to expedite this process, to approve Kalydeco for the cystic fibrosis patients in Ontario who have this genetic defect that makes this drug work to be a miracle cure for those families.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Today I will speak about Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulances. Ontarians deserve an ambulance service that is second to none. It's a service that we rely on to provide safe and high-quality care. We certainly want to thank the service providers, pilots, paramedics and all front-line personnel for their dedicated service, but we also know why the Liberal government has introduced this bill.

Our health critic, Christine Elliott, made a good point in her response to the minister's statement on February

26: "This government cobbled together this piece of legislation in haste, in order to provide cover for the ministry's and minister's failure to do their job and to provide the appropriate oversight of the air ambulance service in Ontario." She continued, "What's even more troubling is, the legislation was put together before the public accounts committee heard from all of the relevant witnesses and before we understood what the conditions were that led to this air ambulance mess at Ornge in the first place. How can you possibly expect to develop a piece of legislation when you don't really even know what the problem is yet?"

But we do know one thing: There has been abuse of public money at Ornge. My colleague Lisa Thompson, the member from Huron—Bruce, had this to say: "Ontario taxpayers deserve so much better. When you hear that there's an executive spending literally double digits on a bottle of water, taking trips across the world on the taxpayers' back, it goes to show that this oversight—this ministry has been totally benign and turned a blind eye to the issues at hand." I agree with her. She is absolutely right. While waste and mismanagement and abuse of public money was taking place, the government didn't take notice. It didn't take action. Meanwhile, patients appeared to be—at the highest levels of Ornge and in the government—a secondary concern.

It's frightening, what we have heard about how the lives of patients were put at risk because of inadequate equipment or insufficient resources where it really counted. Ornge purchased helicopters that didn't even allow paramedics to adequately do their job; in some cases they couldn't even administer CPR.

John O'Toole, my colleague from Durham, raised several examples in a previous debate of abuse of public trust. He told the House about expensive, high-speed racing boats that once were docked in his riding. He spoke about the motorcycles, the fancy headquarters—and the list goes on. To anyone listening to these stories from our part of the province, they have to wonder, "How was this allowed to happen on the taxpayers' dime? Who allowed it to happen?"

Since the day these abuses at Ornge were uncovered, the government has done whatever it could to deflect the blame. Instead of taking responsibility, the government tried to do the opposite. The Minister of Health claims that she did not have the authority to exercise proper oversight at Ornge. She said the performance agreement was weak, and that it wasn't adequate. The Auditor General clearly disputes that. It was the minister's government that signed the performance agreement, so it's not very credible of them to turn around and say they didn't have the proper authority to act.

The government can't say it wasn't warned. My colleague our health critic said, "The ministry's failure to listen and take action following the good advice from the Auditor General in 2005 demonstrates that the ministry has failed to provide appropriate service to Ontarians for years. The warning signs were there, and this failure in oversight and management has only worsened in recent

years. In the Auditor General's 2012 special report on Ornge air ambulance, he admonishes the government for failing to meet its oversight commitment."

1010

It's too bad that a number of years ago the government didn't take seriously what was going on at Ornge. We brought this to the attention of the minister a couple of years ago, and it was not acknowledged.

I want to return to the service personnel, the people who do their jobs every day in a professional way, despite the leadership that has failed them and failed the people of the province.

I spoke to this House a couple of days ago about my granddaughter Danica getting a ride in an Ornge helicopter. She broke her arm near Lion's Head, where our cottage is, and it was serious enough that they had to take her from Owen Sound to London to get it set. It was quite an experience for her. They strapped her into the ambulance—the crew was just exceptional—then they strapped my wife into the ambulance and she went along with them. They both got a helicopter ride. By that time, my granddaughter wasn't in pain anymore, so she thought it was kind of neat looking at the lights as they flew down to London. She had a nice ride in the helicopter. It was the crew who made that experience so great for my wife and my granddaughter.

It's not those people that we speak about today. Those people just want to get on with their lives and get on with their jobs.

Fortunately, my granddaughter is doing very well. Her arm is fully repaired, and she has recovered well.

We also wrote a thank-you note to the crew and the hospital staff for their exceptional service in our time of need.

The government does a real disservice to those first responders when it comes forward with a bill that it hasn't even thought through—or maybe they actually have thought it through. That's what really concerns us.

Again, I want to return to what Christine Elliott said this week:

"Mr. Speaker, considering that the ministry failed to exercise its authority as problems plagued Ornge, I'm concerned about the possibility that the passing of Bill 11 will merely assist the government in covering up future scandals and mismanagement. Under Bill 11, cabinet can appoint special investigators to investigate a designated air ambulance service. The bill would also allow the minister to appoint a supervisor to oversee a designated service provider. What's more, these appointed investigators would report directly to the ministry, so instead of providing independent, transparent oversight of Ornge's operation, the government is now going to hand-pick a group of individuals to provide oversight and report directly to those who appointed them. It makes absolutely no sense. These new positions proposed under Bill 11 only facilitate the government's ability to cover up future scandals."

That is what is most concerning to us: that the legislation could only make it easier for the government

to cover up scandals, as it has tried to do so many times before on other issues.

And now the government tries to pretend as if it's really a new government. Ridiculously, that's what the government has been calling itself in press releases and in various ministries: "the new Ontario government."

I think my colleague Rob Milligan had it right when he spoke this week and said, "One of the things that I find disturbing is the simple fact that this government—it's the same government that was led under Mr. McGuinty, and now it's under the new Premier, supposedly bringing in changes and the whole new facade. But no matter how many coats of white paint you put on the old fence, the old fence is broken and the old fence needs to be replaced."

We agree, and we think the people of Ontario will agree, too, because they've seen waste and mismanagement; they've seen it repeated over and over. They've seen a government that hasn't learned its lesson. The money the government wastes on scandal after scandal, from Ornge to eHealth to the gas plants, not to mention the expensive energy experiments, is money the government could have invested in health care.

We know that rural health care—we know that more needs to be done to deliver quality services where they're needed. On a snowy day in February, our health critic came to Perth–Wellington to hear directly from my constituents, including hospital administrators, doctors, nurses and many other professionals from across the health care sector. We heard so many good ideas from the people who participated. The doctor shortage is a main concern for us in Perth–Wellington. Participants suggested encouraging or requiring new doctors to practise in under-served areas, making better use of technology to attract doctors, improving health care infrastructure and addressing work-life balance issues, amongst other things.

Wouldn't it be great, Mr. Speaker, if the money that has been wasted at eHealth, at Ornge and other scandals that this government—wouldn't it be great if we could get that money back and we could put it towards our doctor shortage in rural Ontario? We could put it towards new medicines that are coming out for very sick patients in this province. But that money is gone.

That's what has happened for the last 10 years with this government, Mr. Speaker. This bill does not speak to what we need to get done in this province.

Thank you very much, sir.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome the family of Leah Dehn today, who is the legislative page from Baden in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga. Visiting are

her parents, Gary and Olivia; her brother, Oliver; and her grandparents Arthur and Donna Dehn from Niagara Falls, who have all come to watch Leah as the page captain today.

I'd like to welcome you to Queen's Park, and I hope you enjoy your day.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm absolutely delighted to introduce the family of page Nadim Iddon. That's Sadia Zaman, Neil Iddon and Samarah Iddon. They're all here in the members' gallery to witness proceedings, so we must be good.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure to welcome Lou and Vanda Lovisotto from Richmond Hill, sitting in the members' gallery.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to welcome today Val Millson and friend Shelly Van Aaken to the Queen's Park House today. Val is the mother of a wonderful page by the name of Ellen Jansen. She's done a great job.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to acknowledge that today, I'm going to have the family of page Emily Kostiuk, specifically her mother, Julie Rosenberg. I know she's not here yet, but I welcome her, and she will be here soon.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm honoured to introduce a good friend of mine and one of my great staff members: John Fraser from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased, on behalf of the member from Windsor West, to introduce the parents of page Stone Haines. His father, Kelvin Haines, is here; and his mother, Mariam Roth. Welcome to you both.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to introduce my friend from North Bay, who had so much fun here yesterday he came back: Ishmael Van Derassel.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Sarah Zintel is a student in the Centennial College sports journalism post-graduate program. She will be interviewing me today on my impact in our riding, Ottawa-Orléans. Sarah has been involved in our community as Navan Fair ambassador.

Sarah, welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy and sad to say welcome and good-bye: La mère de Magalie Malette, une page qui est avec nous depuis deux semaines, a également été avec nous pendant deux semaines. C'est sa dernière journée. Bienvenue et au revoir.

I wanted to introduce Michael Hurley from the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions, who is here—not quite here, but on his way to support the family whose loved one was tragically killed in a long-term-care home two weeks ago.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is with regret that I announce to the House that this is the last day for our pages. I would offer us an opportunity to share our gratitude to them.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There is no truth to the rumour that the Minister of the Environment has asked for triple their pay. There is no truth to that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins-James Bay offers us some good advice: to ask them if they want to sit next week. Thank you very much.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On that regrettable note, it is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question this morning is for the Premier. At the justice committee this morning, we heard testimony that was both incredible yet not credible at all.

Here's the history: TransCanada turns down an offer for \$712 million. David Livingston is brought in as the fixer. He's given no dollar ceiling—carte blanche. He has no energy expertise whatsoever, and yet he's the man who crafts five options to relocate our gas plants in Ontario.

Under oath, the OPA tells us the TransCanada deal was close to \$1 billion. He's the chief of staff to the Premier who announced the cost is \$40 million. I say to you, Premier: Who is telling the truth?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Yet again, we had an individual who is now a private citizen, similar to what happened with Ms. Turnbull, who appeared in front of the committee earlier this week. They came forward and under oath answered questions to the best of their ability. I cannot help it if the opposition is calling witnesses who are not giving them the answers that they want.

Mr. Livingston provided an explanation. He answered questions at great length, and I understand that the committee has asked him to come back. So let's let the committee do its work and let's stop engaging in these types of drive-by smears of key individuals who are now in private life and have given of their time to come before the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: David Livingston, the \$350,000-a-year civil servant, told us that he had a blank cheque when he was leading negotiations to settle with TransCanada on the Oakville power plant cancellation.

One document shows TransCanada received a \$712-million offer, yet Mr. Livingston, the chief negotiator, said he was unaware of that offer. Another shows that the province would "be pleased" if the total cost didn't exceed \$1.2 billion. This is absolutely unbelievable. A billion-dollar deal is done with absolutely no financial end in sight.

Premier, are you finally ready to admit the \$40-million figure you tried to pass off as the total cost is an absolute fabrication?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the edge of the line. I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I withdraw, Speaker.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, I think we're starting to see that the opposition once again has only a passing acquaintance with some of the facts. Let's quote from what Mr. Livingston told the standing committee this morning about his expertise in this matter:

"Before I ran Infrastructure Ontario, I had a 30-year career in banking. Especially in my latter days in banking, I was mostly involved with the development of strategy and doing mergers and acquisitions work"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy:—"broad background in negotiating agreements between private sector companies. I think the way the government looked at that was that they had, in me and in people at Infrastructure Ontario, expertise in negotiating with the private sector that they felt was of use in trying to make sure that we get the best deal for the taxpayer."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We also heard and saw, in an August 2011 email titled "Confidential Advice to Cabinet," that Mr. Livingston offered up five proposals to satisfy TransCanada. He told us that he crafted—he crafted—these options with no idea of what they would cost or with no energy expertise at all.

Premier, according to sworn testimony, the Ontario Power Authority said this haphazard approach to planning the delivery of energy in Ontario will cost almost \$1 billion. Yet on September 25, Premier, you stood in this House and said the total cost was only \$40 million. Premier, who is telling the truth?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, the question of cost is something that's being looked at by the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature. It's something that is being undertaken by the committee itself. I cannot help it—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Oxford, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy:—that the committee keeps—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Leeds—Grenville, come to order.

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Hon. John Milloy: I cannot help it, Mr. Speaker, that the committee keeps calling witnesses, and—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Oxford, second time.

Hon. John Milloy:—if they don't like their answers, they're blaming me.

Let me quote again—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just to make sure you hear, because you kept talking while I was asking you to stop: The member from Oxford will come to order—second time.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, let me quote Mr. Livingston about the role of Infrastructure Ontario in these negotiations. He said, "Because I think most of the people that work there"—meaning Infrastructure Ontario—"were from the private sector. All the projects that we had done, everything that we were doing, were essentially in negotiation with the private sector, so we had expertise in doing this and how to do it. The government felt that if we came back with options or views, they were ones as being in the taxpayers' interests; they were views that they could trust."

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is to the Premier. This whole ordeal started when we asked some simple questions in the estimates committee almost a year ago. We asked: How much does the cancellation of these two power plants cost? You gave no answer. We asked: Where in the government's estimates were these costs located? You gave no answer. We asked: Where in the budget were these costs located? Again, Mr. Speaker, they gave no answer.

Despite all the documents you've given us, we're only looking for two: How much did Oakville cost, and how much did the cancellation of Mississauga cost? Premier, will you provide these documents today, or will you continue to conceal the truth from the people of Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Rob Leone: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm happy to respond to the member opposite, and I'm happy to respond because I have done and we have done everything in our power to make sure that all the information is available, that all the questions that have been asked and continue to be asked are being answered.

We have asked the Auditor General to look into both of these situations. We've called for an expansion of the committee so that the committee could ask questions on the full range of issues, and I've agreed to appear at the committee.

Mr. Speaker, we have made it clear that we want the questions to be answered. I really would think that the member opposite, who was integrally involved in asking these questions initially, would see that there is an opportunity, and that opportunity is ongoing at the committee to get those questions answered.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, the opportunity to answer the questions I asked happened in May 2012 in the estimates committee, and we still don't have those answers.

Back to the Premier: David Livingston testified this morning that during his handling of the gas plant scandal at Infrastructure Ontario, there were many details of which he was not aware—important details. Mr. Livingston had no knowledge of the \$1.2-billion maximum settlement figure brought forth by that government. Mr. Livingston had no knowledge that an offer of \$712 million was made to TransCanada. Mr. Livingston also could not say for sure whether he took notes at meetings overseeing the cancellation of a billion-dollar power plant.

Mr. Speaker, this is a case of bureaucrats gone wild. I've never negotiated a billion-dollar power plant deal, but if I had, I probably would bring a legal pad and a few Bic pens.

Why was the man the people of Ontario trusted to oversee these political cancellations so unprepared for his responsibilities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, Mr. Speaker, these drive-by smears are unacceptable. Mr. Livingston, Tiffany Turnbull—their witnesses. They called them before the committee, and under oath they answered questions to the best of their ability, and because they don't like the answers, they're taking it out on them. These people are deserving of our respect.

More importantly, I think it's time that we look again at the facts of the situation. We offered to provide them a government-wide deposit of documents on the gas plants, and they voted against it—a fact that was confirmed by the Chair this morning. We offered them a select committee on this matter, and instead they wanted to engage in a witch hunt on a former member of this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, if there's transparency that's needed on this issue, it's from the Progressive Conservative Party.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, the only reason why we have answers to any questions is because we continue to pursue these things in this House and in committee.

Fast forward to a year later: David Livingston, the chief of staff to Premier Dalton McGuinty, is now tasked with concealing the truth from Ontarians. He testified today that he was not shown the memorandum of understanding signed by that government. He said that the Premier's office was not shown the memorandum of understanding signed by that government. Are we to believe that the Premier of Ontario was not consulted on a \$800-million decision?

The current Premier stood in this House and said it only cost \$40 million. The former Premier told the Toronto Star that the total cost was \$40 million. Who allowed both Premiers to make mistakes, and why didn't anyone bother to pick up the memorandum of understanding, read it and tell them so?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about an individual, a fine public servant, who is now in the private sector, who appeared in committee this morning and answered questions under oath. I cannot help it that

their strategy is failing and that they are calling witness after witness after witness who does not support their position.

Again, let's review the facts. They opposed the gas plant. We came into power, we followed up with it, and they screamed bloody murder. We offered them a select committee, and instead they wanted a witch hunt against a private member. We offered to give them every document in government, and they voted against it.

Mr. Speaker, they have had more positions on the gas plant issue than the Kama Sutra over the past couple of months, and I think it's time that they came clear on their position in this matter.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. According to press reports, the Premier thinks it's time to talk about raising the \$100,000 income threshold for Ontario's so-called sunshine list of public sector workers.

The average Ontarian, earning around a third of that much, is interested in another conversation. They want the Premier to talk about the government's failure to cap CEO salaries. Is the Premier ready to talk about that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I certainly have never said anything like what the leader of the opposition has noted. There are conversations about the nature of the sunshine list and the thresholds and so on. But what I have said is that people need to know what people are earning. They need to know the work that is being done for that money that is being earned.

I don't disagree that there does need to be a conversation about those upper limits and how we deal with those rates of pay, so I don't think anything that the leader of the opposition is saying is inconsistent—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: She's the leader of the third party.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Leader of the third party. Sorry; I apologize. The leader of the third party.

I don't think there's anything inconsistent about what she's saying with what I have said all along.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last September, the former Minister of Finance said sky-high CEO compensation in the public sector was a problem and pledged "to bring ... overly generous compensation packages back to reality." That's a quote.

The government said they would cap CEO salaries at \$418,000 a year. Is the Premier going to take some action on this commitment, or is this just another conversation that leads us back to the same old status quo?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party is correct that we have identified this as an issue. It is still our policy that we do need to look at that, and we will take action. I think that it is a broader conversation about across-the-board CEO compensation, and I think that's what the leader of the third party is getting at.

We've been engaged in compensation restraint over the last couple of years, and we're seeing the results of

that. We're seeing that there are savings that have accrued to the government. That's how we've managed to reach our targets in terms of deficit reduction. It's a very important part of our fiscally responsible plan going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The average single-parent family income in Ontario is \$38,000 a year. For them, \$100,000 is a lot of money, and \$500,000 is more than they'll earn in a decade. They're being told they have to wait for home care. They have to pay higher bills, they have to struggle just to find a job, and they see a Premier who seems to be completely out of touch.

When will this government get their priorities straight and keep their promise to put a cap on CEO salaries in the public sector?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really believe that the leader of the third party is conflating a number of issues.

First of all, she's talking about the discrepancies in earning capacity of people in all sorts of endeavours. I am not going to disagree with her. I believe that there is extremely valuable work being done by people who are not being compensated well in the province. That is the reality. There are sectors where people are not compensated well, and the reality is that there are other sectors that, for whatever reason, society values in a different way, and they are being paid much higher salaries. That is a societal issue and I think it's something that all parties could talk about.

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But what we have done is we have made investments to improve the lot of people who are looking for home care, people who want their children to go to university and want it to be affordable—university and college. That's the work that we've been doing.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the government said that they support the goal of reducing auto insurance rates, but drivers are afraid that this is yet another example where we need a little more action and a little less conversation.

Is the government going to give this goal a mandate to reduce auto insurance rates by 15% in the coming year? That's my question.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will just say what I have said before on this subject: This is an issue about which I've been concerned for a number of months—over a year. I had a round table in my own riding where we talked about high insurance premiums. I brought in the Insurance Bureau of Canada; I brought in the brokers' association. We had a very complete conversation about the issues.

During the leadership, I was one of the candidates who raised this issue early on. I had met with people in Mississauga, in Brampton, across the GTA, and I made it very clear that this was a priority.

Yesterday, we supported the opposition motion. We said that we were concerned about this issue and the principle underlying that motion: that premiums need to come down. We support that and we are going to take action.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people are cynical about these promises because they've heard them over and over and over again. Two years ago, the government brought in reforms that put \$2 billion of savings into the bank accounts of the insurance industry, and rates in this province for drivers went up, not down. Now the government's saying that they want the rates to come down, but they won't tell us how they're going to get there.

Why should drivers believe anything the Premier is saying this time around?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Because we have demonstrated that we can bring auto insurance rates down. Starting in 2004, we took action; they went down 11%. And the member opposite is right: They have gone up again—which is why I agree with her that there's something that needs to be done.

We are going to take action. We believe that auto insurance rates should come down, which is why we supported the motion yesterday. We appreciate the principle underlying that motion; we're going to take action. I have said clearly in public and in our private meetings that I want to work with her on this one, and the Minister of Finance is exploring the options to get at the root causes so that we can see those premium rates go down.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People in Ontario have to be insured. They must be insured if they're going to get behind the wheel. In fact, we require them to purchase this product. The government's job is to protect drivers and ensure that the prices are fair. Instead, Ontario drivers are paying the highest insurance rates in the entire country. They've made it clear to us and we've made it clear to the government: Enough conversation. It's time for lower rates in this province.

Is the government going to give FSCO a mandate to reduce rates by 15% in the coming year or is it not?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're going to take action. We said we're going to take action.

I take the leader of the third party's point that that there needs to be a relationship between the reductions in the industry and the premium reductions. That's exactly what the Minister of Finance is working on. We need to see those premium reductions, and we've done it before. We have made changes that brought reductions to premiums across the board in the province. We will do it again, and that's why we agree with the leader of the third party that action needs to be taken. We're going to do that.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, court documents were tabled in the

public accounts committee that show that the recently appointed chief operating officer of Ornge, Robert Giguere, evaded giving evidence in the bankruptcy proceedings of Skyservice Airlines. That was the airline where he was president from October 2007 until it collapsed under a pile of debt in March of 2010. The documents show that the legal firm representing the court-appointed receiver made numerous unsuccessful attempts to obtain evidence from Mr. Giguere. That evidence was related to money that was transferred from the general account of the company to another bank account prior to receivership.

Can the minister tell us: Was she was aware of Mr. Giguere's involvement in these bankruptcy proceedings before he was hired, and of his disrespect for the process?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's disappointing to see that the member from Newmarket–Aurora continues to focus on discrediting hard-working people who are working to make Ornge even better. Ontario is well into a new chapter, and we're seeing the results that have come from the new leadership that is in place at Ornge. We have a new patient advocate. We have a conflict-of-interest protocol established. We have a new CEO. We have a new COO. We have a new board chair and we have an entirely new board member. We have a whistle-blower hotline that is now active. We've got salaries posted online. We have the new medical interiors. We've got the Thunder Bay improvement plan.

There is a lot of good news happening at Ornge, and I would think if anybody in this Legislature wanted to stand up and applaud the progress, it would be the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: What is very disappointing about that response is that apparently one more time the minister has no idea what's going on or who her new COO is. The documents that were tabled at the public accounts committee include a notice of motion for substituted service. Why? Because her COO refused to give evidence and refused to appear when he was served. Counsel for the receiver made several unsuccessful attempts to contact Mr. Giguere, including email, telephone, letter and personal service of a summons, and he refused to even acknowledge. The other is a sworn affidavit in support of a motion that states that Mr. Giguere was warned that if he refuses to acknowledge he would be compelled to testify. The last witness who refused to testify and had to be compelled was Mr. Mazza.

Will the minister stand up and tell us whether she supports—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think the people of Ontario might want to know who this Robert Giguere is, because he is an example of the kind of very high-calibre people who are coming to work at Ornge because they are committed to providing excellent care to people in their time of greatest need. Mr. Giguere is the former president and CEO of Skyservice Airlines. He previously served as the organization's COO and an account execu-

tive with Transport Canada. He held senior leadership positions at Air Canada, including executive vice-president of operations and senior vice-president of flight operations. He began his aviation career as a pilot with Air Canada in 1974. He currently holds both an airline transport pilot and flight engineer licence. His extensive aviation experience is well known. He is a highly regarded individual who should not be subject to this kind of smear.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Today, the government's former lead negotiator on the Oakville gas plant and former chief of staff to the Premier of Ontario said that the treasury board would have reviewed the memorandum of understanding between TransCanada and the Ontario Power Authority, and the treasury board would have reported to the cabinet about that document that resolved that conflict.

How much did the treasury board tell the cabinet it would cost to settle the gas plant scandal?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the question of cost is something that's being looked at by the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature. It's also something that's being looked at by the committee. Quite frankly, the committee's work would be a lot easier if they had voted for a government motion that was put forward—and confirmed today by the Chair that it was put forward and voted—on the fact that we were going to give a cross-government collection of documents to the committee that went far beyond anything that had ever been requested in the past, but to my shock—I think most members on this side of the House were left scratching their heads—that member and his colleagues put their hands up and voted against such a motion, which would have made the answer to many of the questions the committee is looking at much easier.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: That same lead negotiator and former chief of staff told the committee that he didn't know the history of the file when it was given to him, that he apparently didn't know the costs and wasn't briefed on them, and that he didn't cost the plans that he brought back. When he was chief of staff to the Premier, he never looked at the memorandum of understanding that settled the conflict with TransCanada Enterprises. So the lead negotiator and the Premier's chief of staff didn't know what was going on here. Who was in charge of protecting the public interest?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, let me quote from what Mr. Livingston told the standing committee on justice policy:

"Before I ran Infrastructure Ontario, I had a 30-year career in banking. Especially in my latter days in bank-

ing, I was mostly involved with the development of strategy and doing mergers and acquisitions work, so I had a fairly broad background in negotiating agreements between private sector companies. I think the way the government looked at that was that they had, in me and in people at Infrastructure Ontario, expertise in negotiating with the private sector that they felt was of use in trying to make sure that we get the best deal for the taxpayer."

Mr. Livingston is now a private citizen. He came under oath and answered questions to the best of his ability. I understand the committee wants him back, and I think the sort of drive-by smears that we've been seeing here this morning are beneath the members of the opposition. Let's let the committee do its work.

TUITION

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the very thoughtful and considerate Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, students in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell know all about the importance of post-secondary education. As a result of Ontario's and our government's investment in education, we have one of the most highly skilled workforces in the country. Over a lifetime, those with college or university educations are much less likely to face unemployment and will earn hundreds of thousands of dollars more over the course of their careers. Post-secondary education is a path to participating in Ontario's job market. Tough financial times have affected everyone in this province, and many students have expressed their desire to continue with their education; however, many are concerned about the stability of the current tuition framework.

Speaker, through you, could the minister inform this House what the government is doing to help ensure that post-secondary education is affordable and accessible to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the long-winded member for the question.

Our government is absolutely committed to providing access to our world-class colleges and universities. That's why, earlier this morning, I was pleased to announce that our government introduced a new tuition framework. The new Ontario government is reducing increases to tuition for college and university students from 5% to 3%, which is an average of inflation plus 1%. That's a savings of about \$1,200 for your average undergraduate student over the course of the framework.

We'll be reforming the practice of deferral fees to make them fairer for students, and we'll be working with our post-secondary partners to address their concerns about flat fees. This new tuition policy strikes a balance: We're increasing fairness and affordability for students and their families while providing institutions with the long-term financial stability needed to provide the high-quality education that we're counting on them to provide

to our students. Our students will have access to high-quality education throughout this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for that comprehensive response. It's wonderful to hear that the new Ontario government is continuing to focus on providing better access to post-secondary education. I know that the students of my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell will be pleased to hear about the new tuition framework.

Our post-secondary education system prepares students for the future. The Ontario economy rests on the shoulders of a strong, educated workforce, and I'm happy to see that this new tuition framework will help students keep our province moving forward. Providing the tools to achieve these goals is important with the students that I've spoken with.

What other ways is Ontario making post-secondary education more accessible to students, and can the minister please update this House on the financial assistance available to students in Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: A very important supplementary. Ontario has one of the most robust student financial assistance programs in the entire country. We're ensuring that our students have access to higher education based on their ability to learn, not their ability to pay. Our government is continuing with its successful 30%-off tuition grant. This program is now benefiting over 230,000 low- and middle-income families across this province. For the 2013-14 year, that will translate, for students in university, to savings of \$1,730, and for students in college, savings of about \$790.

Mr. Speaker, more than 20 different provincial and federal grants, bursary and scholarship programs are available to Ontario post-secondary students. On top of all that financial assistance we provide our students, we continue to limit annual repayable debt to \$7,300.

I look forward to working with students and our post-secondary leaders as we work together to build a globally competitive post-secondary education—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities as well. That's interesting: 5% to 3%, and yet you're hitting trades workers 676%. Very interesting. You've got to be proud of that one.

Minister, today in Ontario, we have a youth unemployment rate of 17%. Right here in the GTA, it is closer to 20%. That's 20% of youth between 16 and 24 who are unemployed. At the same time, we have a shortage of skilled workers in Canada that the federal government estimates at 260,000 people right today. Last year, the federal government filled this void by importing over 213,000 temporary workers.

Think, Minister. There's something wrong here. We are filling skilled jobs by importing workers while our youth hang out in the malls. We believe that training more apprentices by changing the ratios is key to creating more jobs in trades for the future. I know you are new and uneducated on this file—that's clear—and clearly care little—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you—time. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's okay, Mr. Speaker. I don't mind the insults. I'm happy to respond to the questions, because our priority on this side of the House is increasing apprenticeships across this province.

I actually want to commend the member for his interest in apprenticeships. I think his heart is in the right place. I think it's really important that we increase the number of opportunities for our young people to seek out apprenticeships, but let me tell you, there has been no greater champion of increasing the number of apprenticeships across this province than this government, so we welcome the member's support in our efforts to do that.

We have doubled the number of apprenticeships across the province from 60,000 to 120,000, and when it comes to ratios—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'll speak more to that in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Your ignorance and denial on this file will not put our young people in Ontario into meaningful jobs. Instead, they will join the exodus of others to other provinces that are not catering to the demands of union business managers. Even your superhero Ron Johnson follows the predictions of the Conference Board of Canada and notes that Canada will be short some 360,000 skilled job workers within 12 years.

So my question to the minister is this: Minister, if you are so convinced that your archaic ratio system in Ontario is the best system, can you explain and tell us what is wrong with the Alberta, Saskatchewan and BC ratios, where our young people are going for training and jobs?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's one thing to personally insult the members on the other side of the House, and it's one thing to personally insult one of his former colleagues in this Legislature, a PC member who is working very hard on behalf of the skilled trades across this province. That may be his approach; our approach is to work with people.

I've got to tell you, the member really ought to get his facts straight, because when it comes to reducing ratios, the College of Trades has already reduced ratios on six different occasions. Do you know how many times, when the PCs were in office, they reduced ratios? Zero, Mr. Speaker—zero. So the member ought to get a little bit of history on his own party, and maybe he should then start with apologizing for the actions of his own party.

We're very excited about the opportunities to grow the skilled trades. We're very excited about the opportunities

we're creating for apprentices across this province. We're going to work with the skilled trades—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated.

New question.

1110

GAMING POLICY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, Paul Godfrey said that the OLG plans to provide the government with a new municipal funding formula in April. So the government doesn't even have a real plan on casinos but yet is moving full steam ahead as if it did, while keeping Ontarians in the dark, pushing casinos on communities that don't want them, without giving Ontarians a chance to express their views.

Premier, during this afternoon's debate on my motion, will this government come clean with Ontarians and agree to allow communities to have a real say on whether they want casinos in their communities after they've been given the full picture?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, it's actually hard to know where to start with this question because we've been so clear that communities have the authority to determine whether they want to have a casino or not. We have said over and over again that neither the government nor the OLG is going to force a community to take a casino; that councils are going to decide. Councils are going to decide how they want to consult with their communities. They can have a referendum. They can do other kinds of consultations. They can—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was quick. The Attorney General is not helping by talking while your Premier is answering, nor is the member from Leeds–Grenville, who is not sitting in his seat. Then I could tell him to stop again.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'll just end by saying that one of the reasons I am standing here today is because I believe in the local democratic process. I fought against the amalgamation of cities across the province, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that communities should have autonomy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: On one hand, this government claims that the Slots at Racetracks Program funds were being misused. On the other hand, the OLG is making contracts that are not open to public scrutiny at all.

Government forced the horse racing industry to take secret transitional funding deals, pending an impending deadline at the end of March. Further, the OLG has negotiated contracts to lease space for slot machines from racetracks, which—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'll withdraw, but he's a hypocrite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not the process. The member will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'll withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please complete.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Further, the OLG has negotiated contracts to lease space for slot machines from racetracks, which are also not open for public review.

Will the Premier explain to Ontarians why the government is pushing secret deals on the horse racing industry, endangering thousands of rural jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we are working very hard to make sure that there's a sustainable horse racing industry in the province. That's the objective.

The panel that was put in place looked at the previous situation and said that the SARP program was unaccountable, that it was not transparent, that the industry was fractious, and that it had lost its focus on the customer. I'm sure that's not what the member is interested in supporting. I'm sure that he would rather see a sustainable industry. That's what we're working on.

The fact is that there are now nine racetracks that have a transitional agreement—nine out of 17. I think that is a very good number. That's more than half, Mr. Speaker. The negotiations go on, and, yes, they are confidential negotiations. By nature, by definition, the negotiations are confidential.

The horse racing industry will be sustainable. It will be smaller, but it will be sustainable.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Like many Mississaugans, I often take the GO train to come to work. I take the GO train because it's fast, it's convenient and it's green. I even get some work done. Sometimes I catch up with friends, including fellow MPPs. Not only is the GO train important to me personally, but it's important to all of the residents of Mississauga, when you consider the fact that what the GO train really does is it connects Ontario's third-largest city, Mississauga, to Ontario's largest city, Toronto. So it's no surprise that I follow this file very, very closely.

I recently noticed that Metrolinx is looking at buying some tracks from CN. Minister, could you tell us what this means for GO commuters across the GTA?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville, because she's doing a great job on behalf of her constituents. I've got seven critics in the opposition—seven; I'm a make-work project for the opposition—and it takes my own member to ask me a transit question, because they won't.

We are actually investing in \$52.5 million worth of track, which is another 13.2 kilometres between Oakville and Burlington. One of the reasons we're doing that is because of members from Oakville and from Mississauga

who have really championed this. Owning this track for the next 100 years will improve travel time and help working families get to work and get home. We're now working towards two-way service.

This government is more committed to transit and transportation infrastructure than any other in about 50 years in this province, and we're pretty proud of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you for that update, Minister, and I look forward to the commute getting even smoother, now that we have more tracks. My understanding is that passengers are going to get priority over freight.

My other question, Minister, is this: Mississauga is one of the fastest-growing cities, and it's really growing along the Milton GO corridor, so I wanted to know what we are doing to introduce all-day, full-day GO service on the Milton line.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Anyone who rides GO service, whether they're going out to Kitchener-Waterloo or out to Aldershot, will see massive construction going on, on all of those lines. Why is that happening? Because we are building the capacity for greater express trains, for two-way service. We are now moving to two-way all-day service on all seven GO lines and also, obviously, on the Lakeshore service.

This costs money. We've already put over \$16.1 billion in public transit, including more than \$7.7 billion into GO.

There are members opposite who say that we can't have new revenue tools, that somehow we can't afford that. Some \$6 billion is coming out of our economy in the GTA—and that's coming out of working families' income. It is about young people who don't get jobs because of that \$6 billion, and it is lost investment.

There is nothing more expensive to the taxpayers of Ontario than inaction and a lack of investment. We stand for working families—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Premier. Premier, your predecessor, who graced us with his presence yesterday for the first time since prorogation, sliced and diced the Taxpayer Protection Act every time he felt like raising taxes or introducing a new tax, which he did often. But at least when the member for Ottawa South was Premier, he had gone to the electorate and was given a mandate, even though keeping his promises was not his strong suit.

Premier, the people of Ontario haven't given you a mandate. You've been selected, not elected. Will you show the voters of Ontario respect by supporting legislation to strengthen the Taxpayer Protection Act and realize that you need to have a conversation with the people of Ontario before you raise new taxes or find new revenue tools?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm going to dig down into that question and assume that the concern from the member is that we might actually commit to building transit in the province of Ontario over the next decade. I think that's actually what the member is getting at.

I had the privilege of serving as Minister of Transportation for a couple of years. It was very clear to me that the infrastructure deficit across this province is manifested in a couple of ways. One is that we have not had enough transit built in our urban centres across the province for at least 25 years. Secondly, the municipal infrastructure—our roads and our bridges across the province, of which there are 13,000—needs attention. We need to make sure that there is dedicated funding for that infrastructure in our urban centres and in our rural and small-town communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Back to the Premier: Premier, we learned long ago that you ought not to make assumptions. But, Premier, that's not a real conversation with me or the people of Ontario. It's not real democracy either. That's just lip service.

1120

I hear from constituents from my riding and from across the province that they can't afford another Liberal-NDP tax hike. I hear from my constituents who are moving west to escape the economic failure of your new government. A conversation is a two-way street. You've been doing a lot of talking; it's time to actually start listening.

Premier, I know champagne socialism is your drink of choice when you meet with your member from Hamilton Centre, but it's time for both of you to stand up, put down your mimosas and help protect hard-working people of this province from another tax grab and strengthen the Taxpayer Protection Act.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, drawing on my capacity as a former teacher of English as a second language, I'm going to give an A to that question for creativity. Me with a mimosa? I don't know. I'm not so sure.

We are committed to bringing in a budget that acknowledges the needs of this province, that acknowledges that being fiscally responsible is absolutely essential if we are going to be able to continue to provide the services that people in this province need: education and health care, and investment in infrastructure, because I would say that infrastructure is one of the fundamental conditions for economic growth. I would expect that the member opposite, given the rural and vast riding that he represents, would actually be supportive of us making sure that infrastructure is in place for all of his constituents so that goods can move, so that they can get to work, so that their infrastructure is maintained—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

TUITION

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. We know that Ontario students are paying the highest tuition fees in the country while receiving the least per-student investment from this government. Today, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities announced a new tuition framework that will once again see our colleges and university students watch their tuition fees increase by 3% to 5% every year for the next four years.

Can the minister explain how increasing fees will help the youth of this province afford the education they need?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I was very pleased this morning to be able to announce that, indeed, we'll be lowering the burden on students on future tuition increases from what would have been 5% under the current framework to 3% on average. Mr. Speaker, that will be a savings of about \$1,200 over the course of the framework to those very students.

I'll welcome the member's support as well for the 30%-off tuition grant, which benefits students right across this province—low- and middle-income students. We're now up to 240,000 students across Ontario that are benefiting from this grant.

Mr. Speaker, we've been listening very carefully to the concerns of students across this province, and we're responding very robustly to ensure that not only are we reducing the burden on students; we're also ensuring that we maintain the quality of our post-secondary-education system, which is just as important.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The government continues to ignore the rising costs of tuition as a barrier to post-secondary education. Under their watch, the Liberals have allowed tuition fees to increase by more than 70% in Ontario.

According to the Bank of Montreal report in the Toronto Star, a child born in Canada today could pay more than \$140,000 for a four-year university degree. The people of London, who are facing a 9.2% unemployment rate, can ill afford those costs.

Can the minister explain why Ontario students and their families should continue to pay the highest tuition fees in the country and continue this cycle of debt?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to talk about accessibility to our post-secondary-education system. We've increased the number of students in our post-secondary education system by 160,000 students since we've been in office. There's no country in the English-speaking world that has done a better job of increasing the participation rate in post-secondary education than we have.

Mr. Speaker, we're not satisfied with that. We think we can do even more. We're the best almost in the world when it comes to that. We think we can do even more. That's why we moved today to adjust our tuition framework, going forward, to provide up to \$1,200 in savings for your average undergraduate student over the course

of the next four years. That's why we remain committed to our 30%-off tuition grant.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to get this job done, working with our post-secondary partners to ensure we're providing the best-quality education at affordable costs.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

My riding of Scarborough–Agincourt is the home of many new Ontarians. They make significant social, cultural and economic contributions to the community and to our province.

However, some of the newcomers are faced with the challenge of not speaking either English or French as their first language. I've seen firsthand the challenges of newcomers when they come to our province. In our society, the ability to speak, write, read and comprehend a language is critical for success. Newcomers know this better than anyone else, and it's these language skills that are the foundation for success in Ontario's communities, schools and workplaces.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: What is the government doing to support newcomers in acquiring language skills?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for her question. From my work with her at the Toronto District School Board and here in the House, I know that she's a tireless advocate for newcomers in our community. Thank you so much.

When newcomers integrate successfully into our community, every person benefits. That's why this year we're investing close to \$67 million into tuition-free adult language programs. Our programs will help over 120,000 people here in this province learn English or French. It makes it easier for newcomers to learn the languages they need to be successful in their jobs.

Mr. Speaker, since 2003, this government has invested more than \$900 million into programs and services that help newcomers get the language program services that they need and to ensure that they're ready to work here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you to the minister for that overview of the ministry's work in terms of helping newcomers in their communities.

In my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, we are fortunate to have several agencies that provide language training. They include the Centre for Information and Community Services, which provides over 20 language programs for newcomers, and a riding association called the Agincourt Community Services Association, which holds weekly conversational classes for newcomers. My constituents continue to tell me that language training programs are making a difference.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is the ministry doing to provide improved language training programs to a community like Scarborough–Agincourt?

Hon. Michael Coteau: The member is absolutely right. We are seeing great results from Ontario language training programs.

A number of changes to the adult language training programs are in progress to ensure that programs deliver the language training newcomers need. These changes will help ensure that programs are learner-focused and results-based. They will also improve the coordination between the federal and provincial government language training programs to address any gaps that may exist. For example, we expanded the eligibility of the programs to help more people get access to them, and we introduced instructor standards to ensure newcomers get quality instruction.

Our government remains committed to ensuring that programs continue to grow and evolve to meet the needs of Ontario's newcomers. Mr. Speaker, we know that when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Premier. Premier, just over one year ago your government decided to wager 60,000 jobs when your party and the NDP joined forces to cancel the successful slots-at-racetracks partnership. We know that this wasn't entirely the Liberals' doing. It took the support and endorsement of the NDP caucus to allow your budget to pass and the death sentence to be imposed on families, horses and indeed the entire horse racing industry.

Premier, with no races currently scheduled for the upcoming season and eight tracks without a deal for 2013, do you have any sort of plan for the thousands and thousands of men and women who will now be unemployed as of Tuesday morning?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Actually, there is going to be a season. There are transition agreements with nine tracks. There will be racing at those tracks.

Mr. Speaker, my predecessor appointed a panel: John Snobelen, Elmer Buchanan, John Wilkinson. They looked at the situation. What they said was that the SARP program was unaccountable, was not transparent, and it had created a fractious industry and an industry that had lost focus on the customer. I don't believe that the member opposite thinks that that kind of industry and program should have been—

Interjections.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's enough. Stop the clock, please. Now, when I sit down—let it finish.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's—hold off. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Based on the report that that group of people brought forward, we have a plan. The plan is working. Over half the racetracks in the province have got agreements for a transition—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Premier, over one year ago, the Liberals, working together with the NDP, united to pass your budget, killing the slots-at-racetracks partnership and risking the livelihoods of 60,000 men and women. On the contrary, Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs are the only party to have put forward a comprehensive plan to grow and develop Ontario's horse racing industry, including cancelling the OLG's plan to abandon racetrack slots and scrapping your plans to build 29 new casinos across the province of Ontario.

Premier, on Tuesday, thousands of Ontario workers will be out of a job courtesy of the Liberals and your NDP friends. Since your party and the NDP caused this problem, do you have a plan for these people? If so, let us know today.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's very interesting; it was not our government that put an unaccountable, un-transparent, fractionary program in place. It was the party opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not stopping the clock.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It was the party opposite, and what we did was, we pulled together a group of people—John Snobelen, John Wilkinson and Elmer Buchanan—and they've given us recommendations. We're going to move forward with those recommendations. Over half the tracks have got agreements, and on the issue of who we're willing to work with: We'd be happy to work with the party opposite. They didn't read the budget before they rejected it; they didn't read the throne speech before they rejected it. They haven't read our budget and they've already rejected it. It's pretty hard to work with people who don't want to work with you.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. The federal government has stated its intention to repeal the law that regulates packaged food sizes sold in Canada, paving the way for foreign producers to take over the Canadian market, which will lead to Ontario jobs being lost; it's Conservatives cutting red tape. The Bonduelle plant in Tecumseh, the Heinz plant in Leamington and the Sun-Brite cannery in Kingsville are under threat of closure. What has the Premier and Minister of Agriculture done to stop the closure of food packaging plants and the loss of jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the member opposite, who is my critic. We had a chance to talk about this issue, and the issues that he has raised are exactly why, in my first conversation with federal Agriculture Minister Ritz, I raised this issue. I raised our concern about the changes—the packaging concerns—and I talked to him about the need for some mitigation and some planning around this, because it's very important to me that when we talk about agri-food and we talk about the \$34 billion that the agri-food

industry contributes to our GDP, that we're talking about processing as well.

Those container issues are very, very important to that industry, so I've raised it with the federal government. I will continue to make it a priority, and I hope that the federal government will work with us on it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: My supplementary is, once again, to the Premier. If these plants are forced to close, not only will the processing jobs be lost, but the farmers who supply these plants with safe, healthy Ontario products will lose their market. Since introducing the Local Food Act, the Premier has spent a lot of time talking about increasing access to Ontario's produce. If the federal government goes ahead with its plan, what is the Ontario government going to do to protect the local food that we have access to now?

Premier, are you going to act to save our Heinz ketchup?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said, these are changes that could be made at the federal level, which is why I raised it as a top priority with the federal minister. We're also working with the University of Windsor to develop a study of the comprehensive impact of these changes, because it's really important to us that we're able to articulate exactly what the changes would be.

But I have to reiterate: The federal government is going to need to work with us on this. That's why I raised it with Minister Ritz and I will continue to raise it with him: because I agree with the member opposite that the food processing industry is a very, very important part of the agri-food industry at large. And so we want to make sure that those industries can—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —that they can survive and they can grow. So I'll continue to raise it with the federal minister, and my hope is that we'll see some mitigation of the issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I just have one comment to make, and that is I would like to acknowledge that I did not have to offer any help to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek today. Thank you very much for that.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I take great pleasure this afternoon to introduce members in attendance today from the Quarter Racing Owners of Ontario, in the persons of Bob Broadstock, Rik Hudson, Kim Ito, Don Reid, Barb Graham, Belinda Taggart, Gayle Sommer, Carol McIntyre, Samantha Manuel, Gail Woodward, Betty Graham and Lisa Kalvoda. I'd ask the members to give them a warm welcome today.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's my pleasure to welcome Bishop Christoforos to the Legislature today. He has been serving the community since 1999.

I'd also like to welcome the consul general here in Toronto for the Greek community on this special day, Greek Independence Day.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to welcome and introduce a good friend and great roofer in Ontario: Gordon Sproule is joining us here in the House today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I need a quote. Further introduction of guests?

It's now time for statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AUTISM

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Every April 2, the United Nations marks World Autism Awareness Day, a day to boost awareness around all those living with autism spectrum disorders.

Autism is a universe we are still exploring, and that universe is growing. Occurrence rates have grown almost 80% since this awareness day began six years ago. Autism currently affects roughly one in 90 children and is more common in boys, who are four times more likely than girls to have autism.

Caring intervention can make a huge difference, so I would like to salute the work of dedicated individuals like Marg Spoelstra at Autism Ontario and compassionate experts at agencies like Burlington's ROCK and Woodview. Their work changes lives.

I would also like to acknowledge the advocacy of constituents like Andrea Kovacs, the mother of an adult son living with autism.

Ignorance of autism spectrum disorders can be more limiting than the conditions themselves. This April 2 is the first time the federal government has officially recognized World Autism Awareness Day.

Autism Ontario is sending all of the provinces and municipalities the World Autism Awareness Day flag, to be raised to help raise awareness and encourage support. We all have a role to play.

SOLAR ENERGY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I've met with a number of people in the solar energy sector this past month who've told me they're looking at job losses starting as soon as next week.

SolSmart, in my riding, employs 20 people, and they will have exhausted their microFIT allocation very shortly, as will have many others. They're looking at substantial job losses.

The Liberals promised jobs and business opportunities when they brought in the Green Energy Act. People invested money and time in the belief that Ontario was opening the doors to a 21st-century industry. Instead,

what many are now seeing are losses—job losses and business losses.

Solar Power Network, which has been developing solar installations with First Nations bands and municipalities, notes that the application for solar contracts is four times the contracts available. If the capacity limit is not raised, there will be severe damage to Ontario's small business owners and to manufacturing employers.

A failure to nurture and sustain our solar energy industry will damage many people and will damage Ontario's prospects for developing new industry. The Premier and the Minister of Energy must act.

PRIX CIVIQUES

M. Grant Crack: J'étais tellement fier d'assister samedi soir au Banquet de la francophonie de l'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario—l'ACFO—de Prescott et Russell, à la présentation du Prix jeunesse Thomas-Godefroy, et l'Ordre de la francophonie de Prescott et Russell à six résidents de Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Mélanie Brulotte et Andréanne Marcotte se sont méritées le Prix jeunesse Thomas-Godefroy. Les vainqueurs du prix de l'Ordre de la francophonie de Prescott et Russell sont Louise Bédard, Gilles Blache et Daniel-Pierre Bourdeau, ainsi que le chef de police de Hawkesbury, Bryan MacKillop.

En 1999, l'ACFO créa l'Ordre de la francophonie de Prescott et Russell afin de reconnaître des individus émérites qui ont largement contribué à la promotion et à la défense de la langue française ici ou ailleurs. Cet honneur est venu combler un grand besoin dans la communauté puisque aucune reconnaissance de ce genre n'existait.

Chaque année, à l'automne, l'ACFO Prescott-Russell invite la population à soumettre à un comité de sélection indépendant des noms de personnes aptes à être considérées pour être admises à l'Ordre. Les lauréats sont admis à l'Ordre lors du Banquet de la francophonie de Prescott et Russell en mars.

Depuis 1999, 87 récipiendaires de notre région ont reçu cet honneur, et après le banquet de samedi dernier, le nombre s'élève maintenant à 91.

Félicitations à tous les honorés.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: One year ago, the Liberal government abruptly cancelled the Slots at Racetracks Program. While the Liberals abandoned the horse racing industry, the Ontario PC caucus stood with them, working with them in holding the government to account.

The Liberals cancelled the program in their 2012 budget, but they needed help to pass that budget which so devastated the horse racing industry. Luckily for the Liberals, there was a white knight riding to the rescue. Actually, you might say it was a knight in shining orange armour, because when it really counted, the Liberals

could count on the NDP. But the horse racing industry wasn't so lucky. When they needed them most, the NDP sat on their hands.

Now, a year later, it appears that the NDP have realized the error of their ways. We are pleased to see that the member for Essex will come forward with a motion to address the crisis in horse racing. I intend to support that motion. But let's not kid ourselves: If that member and his party had voted against the 2012 Liberal budget, had they followed the lead of the Ontario PC caucus, there would be no need for a motion today. The horses are already out of the barn, as the saying goes, and that member is just now trying to close the gate.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: For decades, public libraries have been an important part of the lives of people in northwestern Ontario. Rather than being made obsolete by new technologies, the importance of these institutions has increased in recent years. Increasingly, libraries in the north are becoming the sole place where people can access Ontario government services, as ServiceOntario centres have experienced slashed hours in many communities and travel information centres have been closed.

Despite their important role, provincial funding for libraries has been frozen following significant cuts to the provincial grant system in 1997, and there has not been a funding formula that addressed the much higher cost of providing these services in the north. What's especially alarming is the fact that not every resident of Ontario has access to free public libraries, as residents of unorganized townships, located primarily in the north, have to purchase expensive subscriptions to have access to their nearest library.

But we can't fault the libraries, which rely on municipalities for almost all of their funding. With municipalities facing budget shortfalls of their own, many public libraries in the north are facing cuts, even potential closures, as a result of the province's failure to recognize their importance. That's why I'm calling on the government today to consult with librarians across the province and to develop a provincial strategy that will enable libraries to continue to thrive right across this province.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Page Dasha Metropolitan-sky and I just had lunch today, and we're pretty proud because we're both from Oakville.

It's a pleasure to stand today and congratulate James Hinchcliffe from my riding of Oakville on his first career IndyCar Series victory this past weekend in St. Petersburg, Florida. Hinchcliffe, who was racing for Andretti Autosport, captured the checkered flag and became the first Canadian to win a race since Paul Tracy did in 2007.

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The self-proclaimed Mayor of Hinchtown is poised to become IndyCar's next star. He has improved from 12th

overall in his rookie season to eighth last year, while also being named IndyCar's most popular driver. Members will likely remember his face being plastered all over billboards all around Queen's Park last year.

Hinchcliffe is a graduate of Oakville Trafalgar High School. He's always proud to talk about his hometown and his country and displayed that pride Sunday when he waved the Canadian flag shortly after victory. He has often referred to the successful history of the racing tradition in Canada as an inspiration, and he recognized past Canadian winners like Tracy, Goodyear, Villeneuve, Carpenter and his sports idol growing up, Greg Moore, for their contribution to his success.

Hinchcliffe is now adding to that successful history on his way to becoming racing's next star, and I think he deserves the admiration of all of us at Queen's Park here today.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Michael Harris: On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I would like to congratulate the students and staff at Wilfred Laurier University for their leadership and innovation in planning the campaign Love My Life: A Walk for Mental Health.

The event on Thursday, March 14, was designed to create a campus dialogue about mental health in Ontario, which raised funds for the Beautiful Minds program at the Grand River branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association. Students walked from noon to midnight, talking about their experiences with mental illness. The highlight of the event was the outdoor Zumba class, which got everybody up, moving and dancing together. This type of leadership to raise awareness about mental health is great to see in the student community.

In the PC white paper A Healthier Ontario, one of the paths recommends treating mental health equal to physical health, and that the myths surrounding it should be brought to light. Tracey Weiler, one of the participants, said, "[T]he group was energized and excited about their role in promoting conversations on mental health at the school." Tracey was pleased to accompany them, listen to their experiences and share her own story about having a child with mental health issues.

Again, I want to commend the students and staff at Laurier for encouraging an open dialogue about the illness that affects almost one in five young Canadians.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Scarborough Southwest on a point of order.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I ask for unanimous consent to recognize the flag of the country of Greece on this day, being Greek Independence Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member wants to hold a flag? It would be considered a prop, so he's looking for unanimous consent to hold a Greek flag to avoid it being classified a prop. All agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll just show it briefly: This is the flag of the country of Greece.

This year on March 25, Hellenes around the world celebrated the 192nd anniversary of the independence of Greece. March 25 is observed both as a national and religious day of celebration for Greeks. It is a national holiday commemorating Greece's war of independence from centuries of Ottoman rule, and it is also considered one of the holiest days for Greek Orthodox Christians celebrating the Annunciation of the Theotokos.

Greece's desire for self-determination was fuelled by Greeks who chose to follow in the tradition of self-government enshrined in ancient Greece, the world's first democracy. Thousands of years of culture and history have since embodied the modern state of Greece.

The Greek community here in Ontario has thrived for over 100 years, contributing immensely to the political, economic and social fabric of our province. Be it in business or in academia, Greeks have always played an important role in shaping our province's civic and cultural institutions.

Today at Queen's Park, I had the honour of participating in the Greek flag-raising ceremony. We celebrated Greece's rich history and modern statehood. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge several distinguished guests from the Greek community who are here with us this afternoon: Consul General of Greece Dimitris Azemopoulos; Andonis Artemakis, the president of the Greek Community of Toronto; Hermes Iordanous, vice-president of the Greek Community of Toronto; Bishop Christoforos of the Greek Orthodox Church; and visitors from Athens, Greece, who sang the Greek national anthem earlier at the flag-raising this afternoon: Dimitris Kokotas, Grigoris Bithikotsis, Haris Varthakouris and Stelios Dionysiou.

Mr. Speaker, using my best Greek possible, Zito É Ellas, Zito to Ontario and Zito O Kanadas.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I was a little patient with that because of the names.

The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

CANADIAN CONSTITUTION

Mr. Randy Hillier: Tomorrow is an interesting and significant day in the constitutional history of Canada. By happenstance, both the British North America Act and the Canada Act received royal assent on March 29. This March 29 is the 146th anniversary of the royal assent of the BNA Act and the 31st anniversary of the Canada Act.

Unfortunately, many Canadians are not well-informed when it comes to our Constitution and our history. While our Constitution and our charter aren't perfect, they are the highest law in our land. They are the only laws that restrain government.

I recently came across an Ontario high school entry exam from 1925, which required grade 8 students to know the provisions of the BNA Act. It amazes me yet

disappoints me how little knowledge many have of these significant pieces of our country's history.

That's why today I'll be tabling a bill to commemorate and proclaim March 29 of each year as Constitution Day here in the province of Ontario and hopefully raise the knowledge of people to that of what we expected of grade 8 students in 1925.

VISITOR

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, the member has a point of order from—

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, I'd like the opportunity to recognize somebody in the members' gallery. I didn't get a chance earlier, so with your permission, I'd like to do that. That would be Mr. Kostiuk. He's the father of page Emily Kostiuk. I especially want to recognize him because this is his second attempt at trying to come in and see his daughter at work. The first time it didn't quite work out because the session had adjourned.

Welcome here, Mr. Kostiuk.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome all visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PUBLIC SECTOR CAPACITY TO PAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA CAPACITÉ DE PAYER DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr. Wilson moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 44, An Act to deal with arbitration in the public sector / Projet de loi 44, Loi traitant de l'arbitrage dans le secteur public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Since the bill is 67 pages long, and the explanatory note is two pages long, I hope you will give me some leeway in my explanation here.

The Public Sector Capacity to Pay Act, 2013, amends 11 other pieces of legislation that deal with interest arbitration in the public sector. The capacity to pay act, which is the short title of the bill, also creates several innovative elements that are based upon the recommendations of Don Drummond and his commission.

In the interest of brevity, I will summarize the core elements of the capacity to pay act, which introduces the following innovations:

- a roster of qualified, preapproved arbitrators and a fair, impartial process to appoint arbitrators to the roster;
- the elimination of boards of arbitration and moves to a single-arbitrator model;

—a new requirement for pre-arbitration hearings and full disclosure of all the issues.

The act also introduces new detailed and revised capacity-to-pay criteria for arbitrators to consider, which includes local economic indicators and arbitration deliberations based upon a no-tax-increase capacity-to-pay assumption.

The bill shortens timelines for decisions, capping arbitration decisions at nine months. The act also requires mandatory written reasons when arbitrators render a decision.

Finally, a new division is created at the Ministry of Finance, using existing resources, to monitor and report on arbitration decisions and the cost impacts to communities and the province of Ontario.

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I look forward to the debate on this bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just a note: I thank the member for acknowledging two things, and I appreciate them. One is, you normally take the explanation as your short statement, which he has acknowledged. The second thing is, because it was long, he shortened it. I would use that as an example for all members. Thank you very much.

CONSTITUTION DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR DE LA CONSTITUTION

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to proclaim Constitution Day / Projet de loi 45, Loi proclamant le Jour de la Constitution.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, the Constitution of Canada is the supreme law of Canada and Ontario. The Constitution is an amalgamation of codified acts and uncoded traditions and conventions, which outlines Canada's system of government and protects the civil rights of Canadians.

The Canada Act, 1982, was Canada's final step in becoming an independent democratic country. The act repatriated Canada's Constitution, meaning that the British Parliament was no longer required to make amendments to the Constitution.

This bill proclaims March 29 in each year as Constitution Day.

SAFE ROUNDABOUTS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES CARREFOURS GIRATOIRES

Mr. Harris moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to provide for rules for the use of roundabouts / Projet de loi

46, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour prévoir des règles régissant l'utilisation des carrefours giratoires.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Harris: Today I table the Safe Roundabouts Act, which would enable the Minister of Transportation to make regulations establishing province-wide rules for roundabouts. This bill seeks to establish consistent guidelines to ensure that drivers are able to apply the same rules of the road when manoeuvring through a roundabout, whether it's in Ottawa or the region of Waterloo.

Before making any regulations, however, the bill requires the minister to conduct a study about the safe use of roundabouts, as well as consult with members of the public.

Finally, the minister is required to table a progress report in the Legislative Assembly every year until a regulation is made.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy is seeking unanimous consent to put a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be authorized to meet on the afternoon of Wednesday, April 10, 2013, for the purpose of adjourning to the Ornge offices in Mississauga.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put a motion before us. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that, notwithstanding order 98(g), notice for ballot items 15 and 17 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES DAY

Hon. David Zimmer: I rise in the Legislature today to acknowledge that the 31st of March is National Aboriginal Languages Day.

There are more than 60 aboriginal languages spoken across Canada. However, linguists consider only three—Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut—to be safe from extinction.

National Aboriginal Languages Day was established by the Assembly of First Nations in 1989 to raise awareness about the languages of aboriginal peoples and to build support for their preservation.

Aboriginal languages are significant to our country's heritage. The name Canada comes from “kanata,” the Ojibway word for village. Ontario stems from a Huron word, Onatari:io, which means beautiful lake.

Languages carry with them the spirit, the history and philosophy of a people, and they transmit their culture to future generations. The revival and preservation of aboriginal languages is not only important for First Nations, Inuit and Métis, but for all the people of Ontario.

Allison Zakal, the coordinator of the Uqausivut Culture and Language Program at the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre, states, “Language really is the window into culture. When people understand a language, they can understand the culture.”

I'm inspired by the story of Charlotte Carleton, who has been taking Inuktitut classes at the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre since 2011. Ms. Carleton is an Inuk and has lived her entire life in Ottawa. Although she has been surrounded by Inuktitut speakers since she was a toddler, she was unable to speak the language herself. Learning to speak the language enabled Ms. Carleton to tell her grandmother, who did not speak English, that she loved her, just before her grandmother passed away.

As Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, it is exciting to know that there are opportunities across the province to learn aboriginal languages. For example, the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto offers Cree and Ojibway classes. In Brantford—your riding, Speaker—the Woodland Cultural Centre offers classes in Cayuga. In northern Ontario, the Kenora Métis Council is helping to preserve and revitalize Michif, the language of the Métis people.

The government of Ontario is supporting the preservation and revitalization of aboriginal languages in Ontario. The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs has provided funding to support language conferences run by aboriginal organizations, and we have provided funding to the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre to support early language skills and to provide cultural literacy activities for youth.

The Ministry of Education also plays an important role here. It provides funding for language programs for aboriginal students, as well as the professional development

of aboriginal language teachers. In addition, Ontario's curriculum offers studies in seven First Nations languages: Cayuga, Cree, Delaware, Mohawk, Ojibway, Oji-Cree and Oneida, and it is available to all students who want to learn an aboriginal language.

Last year, nearly 6,000 elementary and secondary students were enrolled in aboriginal language programs and courses in our Ontario public schools. This includes students at the First Nations School of Toronto and the Bala Avenue Community School in the community of Weston who are taking Ojibway classes.

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Language plays an important role in the health, strength and vitality of aboriginal communities. On National Aboriginal Languages Day, our government joins with First Nations, Inuit and Métis in recognizing the efforts of individuals and organizations to revive and preserve aboriginal languages.

By supporting language preservation, we are assisting aboriginal peoples in strengthening cultures and traditions that are a part of the very foundation and future of Canada and Ontario. As Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I encourage all people of Ontario to spend some time on National Aboriginal Languages Day to learn a few words of an aboriginal language.

Thank you. Meegwetich. Nia:wen. Marsé.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for responses.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: As mentioned, March 31 is National Aboriginal Languages Day, which was established by the Assembly of First Nations in 1989 to create awareness across Canada of the languages of First Nations people and to build support for preservation of their communities.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples stated that the revitalization of traditional language is a key component in the creation of healthy individuals and communities. Language is not only a means of communication but also connects people with their past and grounds their social, emotional and spiritual vitality.

Speaker, I just want to mention a great Canadian, an individual who was the chief of police in Thunder Bay—he was in policing for 33 years—and my father. Before being given the privilege and honour to be here in the Legislature, I was able to coordinate him as a camp outfitter. What I'm speaking about is something very specific for you, Speaker, and you will understand what I say.

While he was working as a camp outfitter in a lot of the territories, he learned that the youth were very shy individuals and they spoke without words. These are some of the cultural things we don't really know. The way these youth spoke was that when they said “yes,” they went like this: They raised their eyebrows. And when they said “no,” they wouldn't say the word “no.” They would squinch up. That meant no. Can you imagine a Legislature where individuals communicated in such a fashion, Speaker?

According to the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, two out of three First Nations people felt that keeping, learning or relearning their aboriginal language was very important or somewhat important. These languages are unique to First Nations communities and a vital aspect of their cultural traditions. We're blessed in Canada to have a diversity of aboriginal languages. Of the 60 documented individual languages, as mentioned, three are considered safe from extinction, which are Cree, Ojibway and, of course, that which is spoken by the Inuit.

Another aspect was that a lot of the individuals there communicated in so many other ways rather than just body language. My father expressed how individuals from one community to the next, which could be 50 miles away, just by the way they expressed the dialect you could tell which community they were from, which was a learning experience in itself.

I've been fortunate to have a few opportunities to experience the culture of the Cree nation in the far north of Ontario—a family lineage of Mohawk gives our family Métis status. I've been in Peawanuck, Fort Severn and Moose Factory, to mention but a few. But when I was in Fort Severn in the year 2000, Speaker, it was amazing to see—I'm trying to express a cultural difference here that people wouldn't understand. The cost of a bag of milk in the year 2000 was subsidized by \$10 a bag to get there. It cost \$19.50 a bag. I don't think the average individual, or we as legislators, would know that.

As legislators, most of us have not had the experience of the way of life of these people in our very own province. It's very hard to imagine how an entire year's supply would come in by ice roads in order to run the generators for a lot of these communities—they have about a month and a half to allow that to take place—or the fact that a youth would have difficulty trying to buy a pair of skates. Speaker, how do you get a pair of skates for somebody in a fly-in community? You don't send the kid out by themselves. You've got to fly in with an adult, and it's extremely expensive.

Suicide and self-injury were the leading causes of death for aboriginal youth in 2000, with suicide accounting for 22% of all deaths among aboriginal youth, and 16% of deaths among aboriginal people were between 22 to 44 years of age. The suicide rates of registered First Nation youth were eight times higher than the national average for females and five times higher for males. About every 10 days, a member of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, either in one of the region's many isolated communities or in the bigger northern Ontario towns where a lot of them go for school or find work, take their own lives. In 2005, there were 24 suicides in Nishnawbe Aski Nation territory, one of the highest rates in Canada. And there are many more attempts that aren't listed, in addition to the documented rates.

In that same year, I had the privilege and honour to meet with Grand Chief Stan Beardy on how we would aid these kids. Locally, we were able to come forward with a recreational equipment program where leagues,

businesses and individuals saw the need and came forward, and have been able to send over three transport truckloads of sporting goods to these individuals.

Last year, yourself, Speaker, reached out to send the toy drive that you have to First Nation communities, in conjunction with the RCMP aboriginal branch. We need to expand on these programs and focus on these youth to give them the opportunity to make differences in our community.

In closing, I'd just like to say that, while we talk about these things, it's a great start, but vision without action is merely a dream, or just talk. But vision with action can change a world. Let's start to take the time for the reality for these individuals to make a change in Ontario.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's an honour to stand up and speak on behalf of the New Democratic caucus to mark National Aboriginal Languages Day, which will occur on March 31.

This day was established in 1989 by the Assembly of First Nations to support aboriginal languages across our country. It is important not only because it preserves culture and helps strengthen one's identity, but because it helps to preserve the history of our nation's first peoples.

As you are aware, First Nations history has been passed down through the generations orally, and if we are to lose those languages, we would lose a vital link to the past, the lessons learned, and the wisdom that we have collected. All of us, regardless of ethnic background, can learn a great deal from the teachings of our First Nations. As my party's critic for aboriginal affairs, as well as an MPP who represents nearly 50 First Nation communities in my riding alone, I have been very fortunate to have been able to learn a great deal from those who've been generous enough to share their wisdom with me.

Much of the preservation of these languages relies on the supports we provide to preserve it, and I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge today the funding gap that exists between First Nations and non-First Nations education. I want to acknowledge the responsibility that we have here in this Legislature as provincial legislators to ensure that that gap is eliminated.

Rather than dwell on the negative, I would like to recognize some of the many organizations that are helping in this fight. We all appreciate and understand the role that the Assembly of First Nations, the Chiefs of Ontario, treaty organizations and our First Nations leadership play, but I would like to take a minute to thank the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, Aboriginal Voices magazine, Windspeaker, Tekawennake, Wawatay Communications, and others for the integral roles they play in preserving, teaching and sharing the languages.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Wawatay on the decision that they have made recently to reintroduce Seven magazine, which is a quarterly publication aimed at sharing and promoting First Nations culture among youth. After all, if we are to succeed in the goals of National Aboriginal Languages Day, it is the youth who will ensure the voices, history and the wisdom of our elders survives. Meegwetch.

PETITIONS

SPRINGWATER PROVINCIAL PARK

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for petitions, and I think I'll do something brand new. I'll go to the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we oppose" making the "Springwater Provincial Park in Springwater township," a non-operational park as of "March 31, 2013;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the park remain operating and facilities such as the animal sanctuary, cabins/shelters, playground equipment and ground maintenance remain open and operating."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition and will sign it.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have about 300 signatures here that were sent to me from AdoptMe Canada, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the process popularly known as 'declawing' is actually an amputation, that is the equivalent of cutting off a human's fingers from the knuckle up;

"Whereas the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association considers 'declawing' to be an unnecessary cosmetic procedure;

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"Whereas research has shown that declawing a cat significantly reduces a cat's quality of life and leads to behavioural and health problems;

"Whereas declawing eliminates a cat's ability to defend itself when in danger; and

"Whereas the process is considered to be inhumane and is banned in more than 40 countries

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ban the unnecessary and inhuman procedure known as declawing in the province of Ontario."

I support this, will affix my signature and give it to Nadim to deliver to the table.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Agincourt is historically recognized as north Scarborough's oldest and most well-established community; and

"Whereas the residents of the community of Scarborough–Agincourt share unique interests; and

"Whereas historically Agincourt's electoral voice has always been found in an electoral district north of Ontario Highway 401; and

"Whereas communities, such as Scarborough–Agincourt, with historical significance should be protected and not divided; and

"Whereas the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has recently released proposals to redraw the federal riding map of Scarborough–Agincourt; and

"Whereas 'community of interest' is a mandated consideration of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act; and

"Whereas the original proposal from the commission included a unified Scarborough–Agincourt riding; and

"Whereas the commission's report would inexplicably divide the Scarborough–Agincourt community; and

"Whereas the residents of Scarborough–Agincourt should not be divided and the electoral riding should remain, in its entirety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call upon the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario to recognize the historical and demographic context of the Scarborough–Agincourt community and to preserve riding boundaries that include a protected Scarborough–Agincourt community north of Ontario Highway 401."

I fully support the petition, Mr. Speaker, and I'll ask Owen to bring it to the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: "Whereas in Ontario, abortion is a service covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP), paying for more than 32,000 abortions at hospitals and private abortion facilities, at a cost to taxpayers of at least \$30 million per year; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness; and abortion is not" medically necessary "and therefore should not be covered by" OHIP;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To cease providing taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions by passing legislation to remove abortion as a service covered by" OHIP.

I affix my signature.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Avastin is approved for use in the treatment of glioblastoma by Health Canada; and

"Whereas Avastin is currently covered for this treatment by the provincial governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia; and

"Whereas in a clinical study Mr. Kevin Graham had a positive response to this medication and his tumour stopped growing; and

"Whereas Mr. Graham and other glioblastoma patients have not had positive responses to other chemotherapy drugs currently covered by the government of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We respectfully request that Cancer Care Ontario be directed to reassess the importance of funding Avastin for brain cancer patients in Ontario to ensure equal access for Ontarians to the benefits of this treatment."

I fully endorse this petition, Mr. Speaker, and I will sign it and give it to page Fae.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the town of Newmarket official plan was developed through extensive community consultation and commits the town council to manage growth based on specific principles;

"Whereas Section 1.3.3 of the official plan states that growth should occur in a way that not only increases the quality of life for existing residents but also provides a functional environment for the future by protecting and enhancing existing natural features and systems;

"Whereas a key principle set out in section 2.1 of the official plan is a commitment to protect and strengthen existing neighbourhoods;

"Whereas section 3.2.1 states that the objective of the stable residential area policies of the official plan is to sustain and enhance the character and identity of existing residential communities;

"Whereas the town of Newmarket has received an application from Marianneville Developments Ltd. that, if approved, would impose an additional 730 housing units into the existing, long-established Glenway community;

"Whereas the Glenway community was not designed to accommodate the water, sewer, traffic and other infrastructure requirements of the proposed development application;

"Whereas the proposed development would not only change the character and identity of the Glenway community, it would have a negative impact on quality of life, would erode property values and would threaten the health and safety of its residents;

"Whereas the Places to Grow Act, 2005 and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006 provide for a significant portion of new growth to take place through intensification of built-up areas;

"We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Preserving Existing Communities Act, 2013 proposed by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees, that amends the Places to Grow Act, 2005 to provide that a decision made by a municipal council is final and may not be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board if the following conditions are satisfied:

"The decision is to refuse a request to amend the municipality's official plan with respect to land that is designated for one or more of the following: stable residential area, and parks and open space.

"The municipal council has passed a resolution stating that the requested official plan amendment would not be in the best interests of the municipality."

I affix my signature to this petition in support of my constituents, the residents of the Glenway community—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I was going to call it a filibuster, but I won't; I'll resist.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: If I read mine in English, then in French, it still won't be as long as his.

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system";

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Jacob to bring it to the Clerk.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Robert Bailey: The petition I have is from the people of Plympton-Wyoming in my riding.

"Whereas local citizens' wishes regarding the development of wind turbines in their vicinity are not being properly consulted or informed;

"Whereas local government decision-making in regard to wind turbines has been rendered powerless;

"Whereas wind turbines have been divisive in other Ontario communities;

"Whereas electricity costs in Ontario have escalated since the introduction of the Green Energy Act;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that no further development of industrial wind turbines take place until citizens are properly consulted and informed, and local government processes are respected."

I agree with it, and I affix my signature.

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition here with well over 300 signatures that are signed by the people of northwestern Ontario, including the districts of Kenora-Rainy River and Thunder Bay, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources has announced the end of overnight camping in 10 provincial parks including nine in northern Ontario ... ; and

"Whereas this decision will result in job losses for northern Ontarians and negatively impact tourism and northern Ontario's way of life; and

"Whereas local stakeholders and municipalities have not been consulted on these closures and have been denied the opportunity to make these parks more sustainable;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately suspend plans to cancel overnight camping at the nine northern provincial parks named above; and

"To consult with local municipalities, stakeholders and regional economic development organizations regarding the long-term viability of preserving northern Ontario's provincial parks."

I support this. I will affix my signature and give it to Andrew to deliver to the table.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco-fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80," some as high as \$546.84 or some even up to \$1,311.24;

1350

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco-fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

I affix my signature, as I agree with this petition.

REGULATION OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to present this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, as currently legislated by the Regulated Health Professionals Act, 1991, a dentist can be charged with sexual abuse for treating their spouse;

"Whereas the equation cannot be made between placing a filling, scaling a patient's teeth or reading a patient's X-rays and sexual abuse;

"Whereas dentists support zero tolerance as it relates to sexual abuse;

"Whereas, in rural and northern underserved areas of Ontario, dentists prevented from treating their spouses may create a barrier to access;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care immediately exempt dentists from the sexual abuse provisions under the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, to allow dentists to provide dental treatment to their spouses; and

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return the authority to review and exercise discretion on a case-by-case basis any complaints involving spousal treatment to the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario."

I agree with this petition; I will sign it and give it to Eric.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the" McGuinty-Wynne "government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this really short petition from the people of my riding. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty take the unfair HST off of hydro and home heating bills."

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature to it and ask page Stone to bring it to the Clerk.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: “Whereas the Ontario Health Insurance Program (OHIP) previously covered one Papanicolaou (Pap) test a year for women in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the Canadian Cancer Society estimated that 1,350 Canadian women were diagnosed with cervical cancer and 390 died from the disease in 2012, and that this valuable test is a simple screening procedure that can help prevent cancer of the cervix; and

“Whereas the province through OHIP now only covers the cost of a test once every three years under new rules that took effect January 1; and

“Whereas women who want an annual Pap test now have to pay for the screening themselves under the new rules;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately return the OHIP funding for annual Pap tests for women in order to help prevent cervix cancer and ensure women’s overall health and well-being.”

I affix my signature.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have another petition, which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario is the only province in Canada that does not allow the provincial Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children’s aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities; and

“Whereas the people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to address their issues;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To grant the Ombudsman of Ontario the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children’s aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities.”

I support this and will give this to John to deliver.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’
PUBLIC BUSINESSTAXPAYER PROTECTION
AMENDMENT ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION
DES CONTRIBUABLES

Mr. Hillier moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 / Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la protection des contribuables.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I introduce this bill to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act to bring it back to its original intent and purpose, which is that whenever the government moves to introduce a new tax or to raise taxes, the government must bring it before the taxpayers in either a general election or by way of a referendum.

Here’s why it’s so important: The concern I hear most from my constituents is the rising cost of living. People from all across the province have contacted me and, I’m sure, all members of this House to say that they are both concerned and frustrated that no matter what it is, from eggs to milk, from rent to hydro, the cost of living is going up.

We all know that the cost of living includes shelter, food and hydro, but the largest single part of a family’s budget is taxes. According to the Fraser Institute’s Charles Lammam, “Taxes from all levels of government make up the single largest expenditure facing Canadian families. In fact, the total tax bill has grown more rapidly than any other major item in a ... family’s annual budget” every year “since 1961.”

Everything from your income to your property to your savings to your child’s education is taxed. I know that the deputy premier has talked about this. I’m talking about the coalition member from Hamilton Centre, of course. Just yesterday the leader of the third party, in question period, said, “The average household budget in this province has taken ... hits in recent years. They are paying ... a new tax on gasoline, home heating and more, and now the Premier is indicating that she may be asking” people “to dig even deeper.”

Just the day before, she said that “everyday families in Ontario cannot actually afford more Liberal taxes that hurt their family budget.”

This is something I’ve heard in spades from people in my riding and from across the province.

Jane M. from Cloyne, who runs a small store, has told me that because of all the tax increases since the Liberals took over, and especially because of the HST, the retail sector in her community is facing an extreme decline.

Just yesterday, I heard from Royce C. from Burlington, who said that the tax on gasoline is hurting his ability to earn a living.

Bill F. from Kingston contacted me to tell me that he had to cut back on the work he does this winter because he couldn’t afford to heat his workshop.

I know these stories might seem far away and so very distant to some members of this House. But when I was an apprentice electrician, newly married and with young children, that’s what we had to do. We had to make hard choices to make ends meet. Everything from housing to hydro to affording Hamburger Helper had to fit in within our limited family budget. If we’d had extra taxes on

hydro back then, or the higher taxes on gas for my work truck, I'm not sure we could have made it. But I can say with certainty that this would have made life a heck of a lot more difficult on myself and my family.

It really puzzles me that both the NDP and the Liberals can say in one breath that they care for the disadvantaged and the little guy, but in the very next breath they'll show an utter lack of compassion and will raise taxes on that same little guy, creating even more financial disadvantages for the hard-working people of Ontario.

I'm sure the champagne socialists and the union bosses in the Liberals and the NDP have never had to make tough choices. They've never had to make life-threatening decisions because of new taxes. But, Speaker, a constituent of mine from Smiths Falls has. She needs a respirator and oxygen 24/7 to live. When the Liberals raised the cost of electricity with the Green Energy Act, she contacted my office and asked me whether the Liberals expected her "to turn off my respirator during peak hours and take my chances with my life." Then, after the Liberals introduced a new tax on hydro, she sent me the message: "I literally can't afford to live and breathe in Ontario." She of all people needed and should have had a say on the HST, because it was a tax on the air she breathes.

1400

Everyday people were the reason why the government introduced a Taxpayer Protection Act 14 years ago. It was a new law that finally gave taxpayers a voice and some control over the largest part of their family budget: taxes. The Taxpayer Protection Act required consent from the voters before taxes were raised or new taxes considered, either through an election or through a referendum.

Had the Liberal government respected this law, my constituent would have had a vote on the tax on her life. She would have been part of our democracy. Of course, we know what the Liberals did. They hacked and slashed it into effective abolition. In their very first budget, the Liberals raised taxes. They gutted the Taxpayer Protection Act and introduced the Ontario health premium. Then the member for Kingston and the Islands introduced the Respect for Municipalities Act in 2005, which allowed municipalities to only disrespect taxpayers with more tax increases.

Then they moved on the HST in 2009, tossing on more taxes on hydro, gas, foods, tires and a litany of other products and services, hurting our most vulnerable. Then they minced the act even more—the junior members of the coalition last year demanded it—that they raise taxes on our most productive workers. From top to bottom, the Liberal government has shown a flagrant disrespect not only for the principles of democracy enshrined in the Taxpayer Protection Act, but for all taxpayers.

But they were never forthright enough to be honest with taxpayers and repeal the act. No, they just quietly gutted it with exceptions and with legal wordplay. But I hope that the winds of change are blowing back towards

democracy and blowing with compassion for those who shoulder the burden of government, our taxpayers—the Janes, the Bills and the Royces of Ontario.

After the Liberals announced their plan to increase the number of casinos, my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex introduced his bill on casino developments. Almost immediately, the members of the third party jumped on the bandwagon for this proposal for a referendum on casinos. The third party seems to have a new-found love for democracy, at least when it comes to the issue of casinos. While they are loud about the money government makes at the gaming tables, they expect the hard-working people of Ontario to be silent about the money the government takes from their bank accounts, their paycheques and their hard work.

The member from Beaches-East York has asked no less than eight questions of the McGuinty-Wynne government over the last year on whether they would support referenda on casinos. On May 3 of last year, the member for Trinity-Spadina rose in the House and declared, "I believe that a referendum has to happen before a casino is adopted in any city," anywhere. Just three weeks ago, the member for Davenport rose in the House and said, with regard to a Toronto casino, that the "people in my community would really like a true consultation on that issue, and they can get that through a referendum...." In fact, the NDP member for Essex will even be using his ballot day later this afternoon to support democracy and "to allow municipalities wanting to be a host site for a casino to undertake a referendum...."

Even the government seems to be paying some attention, or at least paying lip service, to our lost democracy these days. On the Premier's website, she says that "increased municipal autonomy and local control on the siting of green energy infrastructure" is the way that we shall govern. She said that only communities that are "willing hosts" should have green energy projects. The government hasn't proposed a casino that would be right next door to every house in Ontario, but they have taxed every door and every family behind it. Nor have they proposed putting a wind turbine on everyone's house, but in the past 10 years, they have introduced countless new taxes, and the Minister of Finance hasn't ruled out further tax increases or, as the Premier told me this morning, new revenue tools.

The people in this province expect and demand that they will have a voice in their democracy, and that includes tax increases or new taxes. Taxes, unlike casinos and wind farms, affect each and every single person in this province.

They also expect politicians to stand up for democracy and stand on principles, especially on the things that affect people the most. That's taxes. They want their politicians to support referenda, not just on casinos—like the NDP only seem to care about—but on taxes as well. They will not tolerate the contradictions of a party whose labour critic uses his ballot day on casino referendums. But will he vote for a bill to do the same on taxes?

I don't know whether the members of the Liberal Party and the NDP know how taxes affect our constitu-

ents or whether they know how many hard choices they force Ontario workers to make because of their history of reckless tax grabs. But I do know that if members of the government and the third party actually care about the democratic principles they purport to uphold when it comes to casinos and wind farms, they will support this bill, Bill 19, to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act. Anything less is nothing short of hypocrisy of the highest order from the mimosa coalition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I am delighted to speak strongly against Bill 19, presented by the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Only on casinos.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, I disagree with everything you say, literally everything—except the little guy. It's a question of who actually defends the little guy. You guys surprise me a whole lot. You talk about the little guy all the time, and yet it is the policies of Conservative governments that affect the little guy the most. The very people who are affected don't realize that your policies and your laws you presented in the past and you will present in the future are the ones that are going to affect the little guy the most.

Remember, member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, it was your buddy Harris—I'm assuming he was your buddy—who, within an eight-and-a-half-year period, eliminated \$13 billion of money that we needed. Why and how? By cutting corporate taxes to the tune of \$13.5 billion. So the member from—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You've got to give me a chance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington to come to order. The entire House provided you the opportunity to speak and it was totally quiet. And I will ask the member for Trinity—Spadina to speak through the Chair, not to the member from Lanark.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Of course, if my eye happens to go to the other side, it's not my fault.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I just give you one warning.

The member for Trinity—Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I do my best, Speaker, to look at you as much as I can, except the eyes do wander, as you might imagine. It's not easy to fix one's eyes on one object all the time. You understand that. So I say to the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, when you cut \$13 billion of corporate taxes, who do you think it's going to affect the most except the little guy that you're speaking about? Where and how does a government provide for a health care system that the little guy depends on if you keep giving our money away to the corporate sector each and every year? How do you do that? How do you defend yourself and defend the little guy in the same breath? How do you do it?

1410

“Oh,” says the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, “by cutting corporate taxes, the little guy is going to have jobs forever—well-paid jobs.” Yet the member states in his remarks that the little guy is earning less and less every year. So how does it work, member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington? How does it work? We're supposed to be getting more and more jobs as a result of giving away the taxpayer's money to the corporate sector, and yet the little guy is unemployed, is working part-time more than ever and can't make ends meet. Yet the member from Lanark believes that by taking from the little guy's pocket to give to the billionaires is okay by him and his party. How do you reason, how do you think about these things? And how is it that this member and all the other members think they're defending those little people. How? I just never quite understood it.

We forced the Liberals in the last budget to accept a surtax on those whose income is \$500,000 and up. We thought it was a reasonable thing to do. We believed the little guy supported us in that debate, in that motion that we proposed to the Liberals. And I believe the little guy is on my side and is opposed to the Tories who opposed that surtax on individuals who are making \$500,000 and up. In my mind, if you are a millionaire—if you're making over \$500,000, you're probably a millionaire in a couple of years—you could afford to pay a little more to help pay for a health care system that the little guy and the little person benefits from. And if you need a free education system, which isn't as free anymore at the elementary and secondary levels, we would want those who have a few more dollars to pay a little more.

You would think the little guys would support that, but not Tories. They said no to that initiative. They said no to the measures we brought in to amend the budget. They said no to everything, and they're saying no in this budget as well. All they can say these days is no to everything. God bless the Conservative Party. They've got nothing by way of any progressive initiatives except to say no to everything.

Oh, and by the way, if we cut more red tape, that should do it. That's another Tory—let me call them by the name most people understand—Conservative initiative. Mike Harris cut so much red tape there is none left. And yet the new Tories, young and old, still talk about there being so much more red tape that if they could just get their hands on those scissors, the budget problems would be gone.

God bless the Tories. They have no new ideas whatsoever. And just as a reminder, those fine Tories brought in the Taxpayer Protection Act. Their leader just after Harris left—he was the guy who changed the law that allowed mon ami Ernie Eves to raise tobacco taxes and delay the planned tax cuts in his first budget as Premier. I know you probably don't like him either. Is that correct?

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So I say to you, it's not going to work for you. This is an initiative that doesn't

make any sense. If you really want to protect the little guy, think about the little guy. The user fees you're passing on instead of corporate tax cuts—shifting that to user fees—doesn't help the little guy. You're hurting that little person, and I hope the people watching here and the people watching this program will understand that Tories are not for the little guy. They're for the big corporations and the millionaires.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, I am very, very troubled by this piece of legislation, and let me give you a couple of reasons. They're sort of philosophical reasons why I think this legislation is just mischievous and wrong-headed; I have no idea what it's designed to do.

First of all, the legislation, the Taxpayer Protection Act, puts certain restrictions on the government's ability to increase taxes or change tax rates, all right? That in itself—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, you're warned.

Hon. David Zimmer: —is a responsible piece of legislation, because it focuses everybody's minds on thinking through very carefully if they're going to change a tax rate. But this legislation takes it a step further and says that under no circumstances can one ever amend the Taxpayer Protection Act. What he's asking the Legislature to do is pass a law saying that we can never amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, and then we're sort of locked into this deep-freeze forever and ever.

Why is it disingenuous? It's disingenuous because here is the member opposite who says he wants to engage in structuring the financial affairs of the province in a responsible way, and he says that this piece of legislation tying the hands of government in perpetuity, in effect, is a responsible way to go about it.

This member is a member of the same caucus that, when we formed a government five or six weeks ago and announced that we'd be having a budget soon, sometime later in the spring—his party was invited to "Give us your best ideas about what should go in the budget. Talk to us about your view of how the budget should be structured." We've said that to both opposition parties. And what does the PC Party do—and is this a responsible reaction from a party that purports to be a loyal opposition and is conducting itself in the best interests of Ontarians? The day the government was sworn in, they announced that whenever the budget is introduced, and whatever is in the budget, they are going to vote against it. How can that be a responsible position for any party to take—to say to the governing party, "You've just formed a government. We're telling you right now, the day after you've formed it, that when you introduce your budget in five or six or seven weeks' time, that we're going to vote against it. We don't need to see it. We don't need to know what's in it. We don't even want to talk to you about it"? Is that a responsible opposition party?

Surely, the opposition party, if it has views of what should be in the budget that are opposite of the views that the governing party has—come and articulate a position and say, "We think this should be in the budget. We think that should not be in the budget. We think the budget should be structured thus and thus." We can sit down, as the Premier has said, in a minority government, with the opposition parties and have a constructive and a substantive and a meaningful conversation about what the budget should look like. Give us your ideas.

How can you sit over there and say, from day one, when the government was sworn in, "When it comes time to introduce your budget, we don't want to see it because we know we're going to vote against it"? That is irresponsibility at its height.

I have many constituents in Willowdale, and I have many Conservative constituents in Willowdale who are just dumbstruck. They have been in to see me at my constituency office, and they've called me and said, "David, I'm a Conservative, but I like to think of myself as a responsible Conservative." They sit down in my constituency office, and they have given me some ideas. They say, "Take this back to your caucus. I think the budget should look like this." At least they're prepared to come into my constituency office and sit across the desk and talk to me and have a responsible conversation. I may not agree with what they have put on the table, they may not agree with what I've put on the table, but in the process of talking and in the process of trying to understand where they're coming from and where I'm coming from, it's amazing the common ground that we can find in my constituency office.

Our government makes no statement that we are the keepers of all of the knowledge and that the only party that knows anything about budgets is our party. Our Premier has reached out and said, "Come and sit down and talk to us." The third party has engaged in that conversation, and we're having conversations and so on, but the opposition party—and I come back to this because it's strange behaviour. It's neurotic behaviour. It reminds me of when I was a little kid and my mother would make a new dish. Sometimes I would look at it and say, "I don't want to taste it. I don't want to eat it." She'd say, "At least have a taste." "No, I don't want to. I don't like it. I just don't want to talk about it." She'd put a little pressure on me, and sometimes I'd take a taste of it and find out that I kind of liked it, and I was ready to engage.

1420

But this business of saying, "I don't want to see the budget, I don't want to talk about it, because I know"—three or four months before the budget is even introduced—"I'm going to vote against it." That is irresponsibility. That's not the kind of party that should even seriously think about wanting to govern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity from my colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for the chance to stand up for taxpayer protection. It's a concept that has been dragged through the

may by this government bent on breaking the very Taxpayer Protection Act it signed to first get elected. As a result, taxpayers in Ontario have been forced to bear the burden of 10 years now of taxing and spending by a government that believed every problem they face could be fixed by more spending, more taxes, more bureaucracy, more programs—more Liberal fairy tales, essentially.

Speaker, Liberal fairy tales, instead of beginning with the phrase “Once upon a time,” begin with words like, “I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise, if my party is elected as the next government, I will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes....” Further, Mr. McGuinty promised, “I will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters and not run deficits”—deficits is a whole other story, of course. Mr. McGuinty went on to pledge, “I promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act.” That was a pledge McGuinty signed September 11, 2003—more Liberal fairy tale, Speaker.

The Taxpayer Protection Act was a very timely piece of legislation. It was introduced by Mike Harris, enshrining in law the importance of protecting taxpayers, whether they be municipal or provincial, from further spending and from net tax increases.

Taxpayers do need protection, Speaker. Between 1985 and 1994—that was under both Liberal and NDP reigns in Ontario—we saw 65 tax increases. Taxpayers had no say. For instance, in 1988 Liberals increased gas taxes 1 cent a litre. In 1989—again the Liberal regime—the gasoline tax went up another 2 cents a litre. A tire tax was imposed back then. A tire tax is imposed today. You pay up to \$1,600 tax on a tractor tire. In 1991—I’m now referring to the NDP government—they imposed the gasoline and diesel tax. That was an additional 3.4 cents a litre. In 1992 the NDP raised personal income taxes. In 1993 they raised income taxes again. What happened to taxpayer protection?

Then we had this pledge. What happened? We got a commitment from Mr. McGuinty. Obviously, it was an election strategy saying you’re doing anything to garner votes. We’ve seen that most recently with the gas plant cancellation. So it’s difficult to take. It’s difficult to watch this government as it ensures continued destruction of a promise to uphold the values of the Taxpayer Protection Act.

This government, as we now know, continues and will continue the McGuinty legacy. I predict continued tax increases in the coming budget—I’m not voting for this budget—and implementation of new taxes or running deficits.

Interjections.

Mr. Toby Barrett: We know you guys. We don’t trust you. You tax and spend; everybody knows that.

It’s time to restore those protections that we guaranteed in 1999. It’s time to beef up this legislation. It worked for a while, until we had a government that was lacking in ethics. For that reason, I’ll be supporting this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This is like déjà vu all over again. We’ve got—

Interjection: Groundhog Day.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, it is Groundhog Day. The Tories have stuck their heads out and found out they broke their own law a couple of times.

It’s really interesting, and a little bit thick, coming from the Tories, trying to be seen as, oh, the big champions. They’re going to go out and they’re going to champion the people of Ontario to protect them from evil governments being able to ever raise taxes on them again.

I remember that mantra. You were here, Mr. Marchese. We were both in that election where Mike Harris came into this House, and he ran on the mantra—the same mantra that this member is putting forward today. Then, when he got to the Legislature, he actually passed the law and he put the law in place. And what did the government—

Mr. Toby Barrett: He did what he said he was going to do.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He didn’t do what he said he was going to do. When they got a chance, and they were in a little bit of trouble fiscally, and they had to be able to deal with revenue, what did this government do—Mike Harris and Ernie Eves? They broke their own law. They stood in this House—I remember Tim Hudak. Tim Hudak was a member at the time; I think he was northern development minister. Jim Wilson was here, Ted Arnott was here, and a whole bunch of other members who were here at the time—they stood in this House and they voted against the very act that this member is putting forward. Why? Because the government was having fiscal problems, and they said, “We’ve got to raise taxes.”

Interjection: That was different.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I hear this member saying, “That was different.” How is it different to the people back home if it’s a Tory who raises the taxes, a New Democrat or a Liberal? Oh, Tories somehow or other are magical in being able to raise taxes and only they know when? What hypocrisy. This is more of the same.

These members over here tend to want to be seen as standing up for the little guy, but we all know what this is about. This is all about standing up for the people whom they represent as Conservatives. It’s not about the little guy.

Look at the white papers that this party has put forward. Tim Hudak—and they’re going to applaud the white paper. Stand up and applaud the white papers. Come on. Applaud, applaud.

Applause.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Applaud those white papers, and do it again. I’m going to run on those white papers, it’s so crazy. My God. They’re saying, “You know what? If you happen to have a defined pension plan in this province, that’s wrong, and we’ve got to take it away from you. All those people who have put 10% of their income

into their pension plan for the last 20 or 30 years: Take it away."

They say, "Let's get rid of unions. They're just a pain in the bum. We don't need unions. We don't need people having collective bargaining. That's a bad thing."

Here's the best one: They say, "If your son or daughter goes to college or university and they happen to not get a good mark, they won't be able to borrow money, because Tim Hudak says that only those people who have good marks can borrow money for a student loan." Have you ever heard such craziness?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Helping the little guy.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: These guys talk about helping the little guy? This is all about helping the elite and those in our society who need the least amount of protection. These guys are so far right wing, they make Mao Zedong look like a socialist, not a communist. My God. These guys are something else.

I look at this bill and I say: Do I believe for one second that if this bill were to pass under a Conservative government and if they were in trouble, they wouldn't do what Ernie Eves did the last time? Not for a second. They'd be running to the House with the bill and saying, "We're amending our own act, and we're going to raise taxes," as they did when they were in government. They overrode their own legislation, and they stood in this House proudly, saying, "We have to be able to do this"—Tim Hudak, and our friend Mr. Wilson, and our friend Mr. Arnott and a whole bunch of Conservative members over there. So, Mr. Speaker, how—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Wow. I think we should be careful about the language you use in the Tory caucus. But I would just say: Our Conservative friends over here are really, really—I think we should create an award in this Legislature—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The No award.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —the No award, for the party that pretends to stand up for people but always says no. The only thing these guys know how to do in this Legislature is to say no. If they had anything to do with trying to find a reasoned approach to anything, I think they'd run the other way.

So I just say to my friends: I'm not going to vote for this, for a couple of reasons.

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One is because in the end it's not about raising—when we were in government for five years, we never raised taxes: not once.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's the record, absolutely: not once. What did the Conservatives do when they came to power? They raised taxes not once, not twice; they raised them more than two or three times. Who are these guys? I'm not going to raise this, because it is the hyperbole of what this is all about, and this is about the Tories trying to make points on what they say is a great, big issue to save taxpayers money when we know very well they'll vote for taxes like they did under Ernie Eves because

they knew that's what they had to do and they had no problem breaking their own law.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate? The minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm going to join the debate. I only have a few minutes. However, I want to add a couple of points.

I can sympathize with the member from—the longest name here—Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington. He probably meant to introduce some reasonable bill in the House, but I think, by the heading of the bill itself, it tells us that really the bill does not belong in the House and doesn't deserve any support.

We have been saying all along, the Premier has been saying all along, that two things are important. Very recently, we had the speech from the throne, which serves as a guide as to where the government wants to go. Sometime soon, sometime this year, we are going to have the so-called budget. Again, that will be a document worthy—the Premier, the government, will be expressing more in details, again, the direction of the government for the coming months and for the coming year.

It is unfortunate that we see the Conservative opposition already saying, "We haven't seen the budget. We don't care. We are not going to support it." I think they should be paying attention to what the Premier has been saying all along. We have to create jobs. We have to make sure that the economy keeps on going. We have to increase, yes, jobs so we can increase revenues as well. We have to protect the public sector. We have to protect health care and the gains that we have made in education as well. Those are the issues that are front and centre, and we should continue on that.

At least the opposition should realize what is important for the people of Ontario. After all, once we oversee that, what is left? Cutting taxes? At whose expense? We all love to see taxes being cut, of course, but where are you going to get the money from? We'd like to know. We don't want to fire doctors anymore. We don't want to fire teachers. We don't want to close hospitals. With all due respect, I think we have come a long way and we should not deviate from the direction that the Premier has taken so far. It is too important. It is too important at this very particular time, especially when we have done so much.

Speaker, they know; they all come from the rural area municipalities. They like to have a bit of flexibility. We can't keep on saying to local municipalities, "You can," or, "You cannot." A few years ago we did amend the Municipal Act, giving municipalities more powers where they wanted it so they can decide in their own municipality what's best for them, what to do and how to do it. I think we should continue on that particular mentality. We should not interfere, here in this House, when it comes to the well-being of our taxpayers. We have paid too much attention, Speaker, making sure that we provide good health care. Of course, here in the House, from the members, sometimes we get questions about home care, more home care and more assistance. We have come a

long way. We have been doing that, but there is more to be done. The question is, if we go that particular route, we will have to find the money and cut somewhere else. We don't want to cut services. We don't want to cut in health care or education. We want to maintain full-day kindergarten. We want to build more schools. We want to hire more teachers.

Where do we go when we say we cut taxes? Where do we go and get the money? I think it is something we should be considering before we introduce a motion that really goes counteractive to the best interests of the people of Ontario.

So I am grateful that the member has brought the motion. We have to be respectful that it is individual members' hour, private members' hour, private members' bills, and we would love to deal with motions and issues that we all could support, because if we can all support them, it means they are good and they would be good for the people of Ontario.

With all due respect, I have to say to the member that he's got a lot of work to do. I have no idea where this motion is going to go today, but for my part—I have no idea what the rest of the members are going to do—I can't support it, because I know for a fact, when I speak to my people, especially—I have a large component of seniors in my area—they say, "Well, we hear cutting. If you're going to cut, what are you going to cut?" The seniors are in my mind, seniors' benefits are in my mind, as are kids from kindergarten, as are teachers, as are doctors, as are nurses, as is the economy. We have to create jobs, and if we don't do that, we cannot proceed in improving our economy, especially in the schools—we are doing so well to make sure that we provide the best education to our young people, so when they come out of school, they can really face the pressure that we have externally.

I thank you for the time that you have allowed me, and my time is up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's an honour to stand here today and speak to the Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act, from my colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington—that's a mouthful.

It's clear the Liberals have actually broken this act at least twice. It's also clear, sir, that this act needs to be strengthened. We've got to make sure it doesn't happen a third time. I read recently, when I was preparing for this debate, an interesting quote from Robert Heinlein: "There is no worse tyranny than to force a man to pay for what he does not want merely because you think it would be good for him." I think that's very appropriate when we're talking about taxpayers. We need this protection. Raising taxes should be the last resort for a government to achieve money. It should be the last resort when a government needs more money. It should be the last resort when a government needs to pay for something. We have an obligation to the people of Ontario to look for money in other places. That means looking for

efficiencies. That means looking for maybe some cuts somewhere. It means looking to make sure that we're running the most efficient government we possibly can.

When we look at the endemic scandal of this government, let's not forget—the electorate sometimes has a short memory—about OLG, Ornge, gas plants and eHealth; the list goes on and on and on. When the member says, "Where are you going to find the money?"—if I start adding those up, I'm not into the tens of thousands of dollars, I'm not into the hundreds of thousands of dollars; I'm not even in the millions of dollars—I'm in the billions of dollars. People can't even relate to that number, it's so high. It's ridiculous.

When we have an act that tries to hold this government accountable to the people of Ontario for the tax money they spend, and they stand up in this House and tell us that they don't know that there's any other way to get money out of government so that they don't have to raise taxes and don't have to go back to the people to ask them to raise taxes—it's ludicrous.

Let's talk a little bit about the little guys. I look around me, and I see the member from Northumberland-Quinte West, who has a young family; he's a teacher. I look at the member from London-Middlesex, who's got a small family business, or the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, who's a nurse. When I look around me—what do you think we are? If I'm not a little guy, if all the people sitting around me aren't little guys, if all these people with young families to support don't represent people who don't want higher taxes and want their money spent properly, I don't know what little guys are. Don't talk to me about little guys, because I'm surrounded by them.

It's a little rich for the former minister in the Bob Rae government—the former parliamentary assistant in the Bob Rae government—to say that the Bob Rae government didn't raise taxes and the Mike Harris government did. I've got news for you: The Bob Rae government taxed and spent us into oblivion and put us into a disastrous mess. It took the courage of a PC government to actually say "no" sometimes.

Yes, "no" sometimes is the hardest word to use when you're in government. It's easy to say "yes," folks. You do a good job at it, but the people are sick and tired of your actions, spending their money and getting nothing in return. They will not accept it. If you want a plan, we have it—and yes, it is the white papers. What's your plan, by the way? Haven't seen it; haven't heard about it. You sit on your hands every time you get a chance. You guys have fluffy bills that don't mean anything for anybody. We need action. People are sick and tired of not having any action from this government and having you guys sit on your hands and come to the party when it's convenient. We need action. We have action. This bill is action. This party is about action. You guys need to learn a lesson from us.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I stand in my place today to speak in support of an important private member's bill presented by my colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. Bill 19, the Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act, is an act to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999.

This bill supports the concept of democracy. It is a call for democracy by the people. Respect for taxpayers is paramount, particularly now, when so many of my constituents are telling me they can't pay any more. The Taxpayer Protection Act was implemented by Premier Mike Harris to require that any provincial government that wants to raise taxes must first ask the people by holding a referendum. The intention of the original Taxpayer Protection Act was to make governments accountable to the people they govern.

In the last decade, this Liberal government has amended the Taxpayer Protection Act to allow for the biggest tax increases in Ontario's history without the consent of the people. It is clear that the Taxpayer Protection Act needs to be strengthened to respect its original intent. A referendum should be held if government wishes to impose a new tax or levy at the provincial or municipal level.

The current government is desperate for money. The debt and deficit are problems that will not go away and were created by this government. We are fearful that this government will hit the taxpayer again. Mr. Speaker, the taxpayer is tapped out. They cannot pay any more.

We have good reason to be suspicious of the actions of this government. In the last year, this Liberal government has cancelled the Slots at Racetracks partnership agreement that has benefited the horse racing industry and the government for the last 15 years. This government has also demanded money back from farmers who received it 10 years ago for mad cow disease losses. This government is now discussing going back 40 years to collect unpaid driver fines. There is nothing this government won't do to collect money.

But Mr. Speaker, here is a success story. This is democratic. The city of Toronto held a referendum in 1997 asking Torontonians if they wanted a casino. The people were over 70% opposed and no casino was built. Democracy worked. Government should give people the final say over a casino, a windmill or a tax in their community.

They should support this bill. There is no substitute for letting people decide on how their government impacts their lives, whether it's a casino, a windmill or a new tax. Democracy through a referendum is working right now in California and in European countries. It is not only important to ask people for their vote to elect their representative, but also for their vote on how the government proposes to tax them. Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill that has my support. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, you have two minutes for your response.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker.

First off, I want to say to the member from Trinity-Spadina, who said that tax money is our money, I've got

news for him: It's not our money, it's the taxpayers' money, and we're elected to take care of it and provide value.

I also want to say to the member from Timmins-James Bay, you can correct the record but you can't revise history. For the member's edification, the NDP raised personal income taxes twice while he was here under the Rae government, and it also raised taxes twice on gasoline and diesel. So let's not try to buffalo the people of this province, Mr. Bisson. I have lots of good comments from the members from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, Barrie and Haldimand-Norfolk.

I do want to just clearly demonstrate something to the people of Ontario. Here we have the mimosa coalition, the NDP and the Liberals, who say that they have found this new regard for democracy and that they demand referendums on casinos and windmills. But when it comes to the people's money, when it comes to the largest single expense for every family in this province, what people go to work for every morning and come home late at night for—to earn money—when it comes to money, both these parties say, “To hell with you. We know what's best for you and we'll take as much of it as we want,” just as the member from Trinity-Spadina said, because he thinks it's our money, not yours. That's the sort of attitude—a rainy day—a fair-weather friend to democracy at the best of times with both the Liberals and the NDP.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll vote on this item at the end of regular business.

Before I go to the next item, I'll just remind members, because several of you have done it today: We refer to members of the Legislature by their riding, not their name.

HELPING ONTARIANS ENTER THE SKILLED TRADES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À FACILITER L'ACCÈS AUX MÉTIERS SPÉCIALISÉS EN ONTARIO

Mr. Dunlop moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act to amend the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act / Projet de loi 22, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la qualification professionnelle et l'apprentissage des gens de métier.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's a pleasure to introduce this bill today, Bill 22, Helping Ontarians Enter the Skilled Trades Act. This bill really is about changing the archaic ratio system that we have in the province of Ontario to a 1-to-1 ratio system. I wanted to point out some key points right off the bat. First of all, I think we're all aware that there has not been nearly enough attention paid to people

entering the skilled trades in this province. One of the key things we've seen with the ratios and with this nonsense around the College of Trades boondoggle—I think it's clear to say that it's brought a lot of attention. I'll get into that a lot more in a few minutes.

I want to start out by reading what the Ontario Chamber of Commerce says about 1-to-1 ratios. If I could take a couple of minutes, I'd like to say that.

"Why the Ratio Needs to Change"—by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

"Economic impact: Some argue employers want a 1-to-1 ratio to increase profitability. However pay for apprentices can be scaled to experience. A first-year apprentice will be paid less than a fifth-year apprentice who is able to complete the job faster and with less supervision. Profitability is driven by highly skilled workers that complete jobs quickly and the ability to hire, train, and retain these workers over the long term. Profitability is not necessarily driven by lower apprenticeship ratios.

"Rates of completion: The current 3-to-1 ratio prevents business from hiring apprentices thereby lowering the overall number of skilled apprentices in the labour market. The government's Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program further increases the gap between registered apprentices and completion because it bypasses the 3-to-1 ratio to introduce youth into the programs in high school, only to limit the availability of apprenticeships upon graduation.

"Jurisdictional comparison: Ontario (and PEI) have the highest apprenticeship ratios in Canada, with many ratios skyrocketing to 3-to-1 after the first apprentice is hired by a business. In every other province, the apprenticeship ratio stays closer to 1-to-1." And of course, in many provinces now it's 1 to 2, so you can have one journeyman for two apprentices.

"Health and safety of workers: A 1-to-1 ratio between apprentice and journeyperson provides direct training and supervision for the apprentice. There is little evidence to suggest that lowering the ratio decreases the safety conditions for apprentices on job sites or reduces employers' responsibilities for employee safety, which are dictated by the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

"Why Apprenticeships Work:

"Apprenticeships are an effective way to plug the growing skills gap in Ontario. Current estimates indicate a provincial shortage of nearly 560,000 skilled workers by 2030. The skills shortage is a significant barrier to attracting new investment in the province."

That is from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. I thought I would start it out with that. I have many things to say; in fact, I probably don't have enough time to get to everything I want to say. But really and truly today, as a caucus that's very, very concerned about the fact that there are over 600,000 people out of work in the province of Ontario, I think we're really and truly concerned about the number of young people—in fact I mentioned today in a question to the minister that actually about 20% of the young people in the GTA between the ages of 16 and

24 don't have jobs, and the provincial average is about 17%. That alone should be the alarm bell for everyone.

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Now, the Conference Board of Canada—I'll get to the feds in just a second; I was very pleased with their budget last week. I thought it really got to the point, because it was zeroing in on where the jobs are. And if people want to actually take a partnership, if people want to hire more apprentices under the new federal program, they can. It's up to a maximum of \$15,000: \$5,000 from the province, \$5,000 from the federal government and of course \$5,000 from the employer. This seems to be an area where anybody who is complaining about not getting apprentices—in fact the employer can actually put his money into it, put his money where his mouth is and actually hire more.

The one thing I think we've really got to be concerned about is when we talk about a 1-to-1 ratio. This is not mandatory. This, of course, is at the discretion of the employer. No one has to go to 1 to 1. We just think it's a good, solid move. It goes back to 2008, when my colleague Laurie Scott put a resolution to the House, and of course it was turned down by the coalition at that time as well. The fact is they voted the 1-to-1 ratio down. That was very disappointing that day, because we continued to have problems.

One of the things that people seem to be ignorant of and are turning their backs on is this whole fact of the baby boomers, all the baby boomers that are in the trades. I hear it everywhere I go. The reality is that many of the baby boom generation are about to retire now and over the next decade, and that's going to create a huge number of problems and openings in the province. In fact, a recent comment made by the federal government is that we're graduating way too many BAs and not enough welders. We've got to get to that. We've got to change the stigma attached to that. So we're zeroing in on that as well.

I wanted to talk about the phasing in. Who would train the apprentices? Obviously, we have the community colleges, and people are saying, "Well, if you change to 1 to 1, you can't do it overnight." I would agree with that. It's something that may have to be phased in over two, three, four or five years, and I agree with that. But you know what? The community colleges can do a great job of it.

I've actually talked to a number of the community colleges, and what they're saying to me is, "We may not have all the spaces, but we will do weekend courses and we will do night courses, if we have to, to train apprentices." I'm not talking about the pre-apprenticeship programs; I'm talking about the actual steps, the basic, intermediate and advanced training of apprentices.

Then, of course, we have the union training centres. They're popular in different trades, and they've done a good job. They can be supported on that. And then we've got the Ontario career colleges. Like the Ontario pre-apprenticeship program, there's no reason they shouldn't be training apprentices at each different level, and there's a number of those organizations around. I think that our caucus supports the idea of having those people.

Last summer, I spent—well, basically it's gone on about a year now, maybe even more than a year, and what I really wanted to point out is that I've been at about 110 stops across the province—

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's 110 stops, but it does cover the whole province. I'm not saying I spent all the time in Ottawa or all the time in Kitchener or something. You know, I've been to the western boundary of the province and Timmins and all those communities, and over and over again what I heard was the importance of changing the ratios. It didn't matter where it was, the people wanted to do it.

Now, I should point out one of the things I heard in northern Ontario, particularly in the growth areas, because they think they've got a lot of potential growth with the Ring of Fire and in the Thunder Bay area. When I talked about a 1-to-1 ratio, some of the people at the chamber of commerce up there said, "You're wrong. You can't go there. You've got to be like Alberta or Saskatchewan or BC. You've got to go to 1 to 2. You're not going far enough." I said, "Well, we're happy to go to 1 to 1 to get this thing moving."

But the reality is that many people think we should go to the Alberta model. And if you look at the Alberta model, of course, that's where all the people are making money and creating wealth, creating jobs. And you know what? They're not spending \$1.9 million more than they're taking in. They're actually making money in Alberta, and everyone there is working. So that works as well. That alone is something I really wanted to point out.

Then we get to this whole thing around the College of Trades, because now they're saying that they're going to be doing ratio reviews for all the trades. Good. I hope it works out well, because I can tell you that that we've already tried—as a lot of you know, I'm a plumber by trade; I'm a licensed plumber. I'm actually applying on April 12—I've actually put my name in as one of the people asking for a 1-to-1 ratio review with the plumbing trade. Probably there are not a lot of MPPs doing that this year.

I can tell you that this is what happened last week. This thing is so complex already, and it's so bureaucratic—would you believe, with only 15 people presenting on plumbing ratios, they had to have a special meeting and drag in the 15 recipients from all over the province—Ottawa, London—to have a meeting to discuss when they'd be on the agenda? That's the kind of nonsense we're already seeing with this nightmare.

I told you it was going to be a boondoggle. I predict that the College of Trades will be the next Ornge, without the oversight. It's going to be a tough sell.

They've got all this money that the community colleges don't have. That has all gone into the College of Trades so they can tell you how wonderful they're doing and they can have the big steak dinners and all the things that the Liberals are used to doing as well. That's what's it really all about: It's just more bureaucracy. It's another

barrier to growth in the province of Ontario, and we have to stop this nonsense.

On this side of the House, we believe in going back to Laurie Scott's resolution in 2008—we put it in our platform in 2011—about changing the ratios to 1 to 1, and we still feel very strongly about that today. That's why this bill is here.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? I don't expect the bill is going to pass today. I think the coalition will vote against it. We've seen it all week with votes. I think they will be very upset with us over these comments, but the reality is that we're here trying to create more jobs for young people in Ontario.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities—I'm not sure what he does in his spare time, but I can tell you right now that no one knows who the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities is. They didn't know the last guy, they didn't know the one before him, and they certainly don't know the new minister, because he's not out there being seen and listening to the public.

When I go into an event, I take in a little cardboard sign and my pen, and I speak. When the minister does an event, a communications company comes in and they set up a microphone. I tell them more than they get to know from that guy.

We're not spending any money; we're just getting out there and informing the public what a disaster the College of Trades is and why we have to go to a 1-to-1 ratio. We've heard it from all kinds of organizations. We've heard it from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and many, many organizations.

I do want to thank a number of the apprentices that have come from across the province. These are all men and women who are trying to get jobs in Ontario. And do you know what, Mr. Speaker? They don't want to go to Alberta and Saskatchewan for jobs. They want to work in their home province.

I ask you people to please support this bill. It makes common sense. It's going to eliminate what the College of Trades does. Let's get right to it immediately.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to contribute to today's debate on the issue of workers in this province and particularly the apprenticeship program and ratios.

As a—I don't like to say "a former tradesperson," because I could certainly pick up a hammer and get back to work today, but as a proud trade unionist, as a member of LIUNA Local 625, a labourer, I spent over a decade on heavy construction sites in southwestern Ontario, building bridges, sewers, culverts and everything else you could form and pour some cement into. So I have a little bit of knowledge of what it takes to slug it out on the ground.

Also, in my capacity as the training director of the LIUNA Local 625 apprenticeship program and pre-apprenticeship program, I understood and learned the dynamic nature of labour market demand in various regions.

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What I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, is that the proposal by the PCs today is a one-size-fits-all model. With our labour market demand in changing conditions and the dynamic nature of the variety of apprenticeship programs that are available in this province, it simply doesn't work. It's not feasible. In some instances, a 1-to-1 ratio absolutely works; there's no question about it. For smaller organizations who have smaller scopes of work and smaller employee groups, that works; there's a more condensed parameter on what the nature of that apprenticeship role is.

Let's remember that these workers—typically young workers, but you can enter an apprenticeship at any age, and I encourage anyone who's listening to do that—are learning. They are on the job. They're at school, essentially, fulfilling their hours towards their apprenticeship program. They need supervision, and hopefully the people that are on the job with them are not only providing them supervision and education, but you'd hope that they are also watching out for their health and safety. I can't tell you how many times, as a young labourer, I walked onto an unorganized job site—the nature of job sites in construction and the heavy sector is crazy; you're walking onto a muddy landscape that is changing all the time, that has challenges and safety concerns that are not known. They may have been known one day but not known the other day. You're relying on information at all times, not only by your colleagues but by as many people as are on the job site. The more people that a young worker is surrounded by—just logistically, in the same place—the safer and more knowledgeable that person will be.

I appreciate the position, I guess, or the efforts that the Progressive Conservative member is making in trying to highlight some of the issues in the apprenticeship program. I am, however, concerned that the motives around going to a blanket 1-to-1 ratio are simply gaining access to less expensive labour sources—which, ultimately, apprentices are. They're making less because they don't know as much, and what that does is it doesn't give them the full scope of their information. They are not going to be able to tag along with a group of all the veteran workers who are going to be able to expand their knowledge base unbelievably.

It also has the adverse effect in putting down or actually relegating those journeymen who have sometimes spent decades in the trade, who have earned their spot—it will keep them on a list so that they don't go out to work. They've got to compete against young workers. It's like going to school, getting halfway through your degree, and expecting to get out and practise law, or whatever profession, ultimately, your degree is trying to afford you. It doesn't work. It shouldn't work.

I think there has to be a better mechanism than simply arbitrary ministerial decree. That's why the LACs that determine ratios actually work: because it encompasses labour and management that come to an agreement. I can't tell you how many times we've had a call into the

local for labour and we've said, "Hey, we've got a couple of apprentices to give you," and they would say, "Listen, we're in time constraints. It's time-sensitive. This is a huge project. We want as many journeymen as possible, because we know we're going to get it done fast, we're going to get it done right and we're going to get it done safely." They are reluctant, on many occasions, to take on apprentices, but the discussion has to be had.

I just want to add one more point—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay. I'm being told I've got to share my time. It's a debate that I'm pleased and proud to have. It's one that I appreciate having on behalf of the young workers and journeymen and apprentices who are attempting to get into it, but one that I think is, at this point, wrong-headed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to speak to An Act to amend the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act.

Our government has been responsive to the concerns about the state of skilled trades in Ontario. Following recommendations from experts in the sector, our government took the bold move to establish the College of Trades, the first regulatory body of its kind in North America, to ensure a strong future for the trades, a sector that is a key part of the foundation of our economy. The College of Trades will help to ensure that when the people of Ontario need the services of tradespeople, they get the skilled, well-trained and accountable workers they expect and the quality of service they deserve.

Our government is committed to supporting a high-quality apprenticeship system that ensures public and workplace safety—areas that a member of the skilled trades who's now a MPP here spoke to just earlier—and ensures that the next generation of skilled workers is ready to meet future labour market demands. Ensuring public and workplace safety and ensuring that future labour market demands are met should only be as a result of industry-determined ratios based on their own requirements and trade expertise.

Why do Ontario's skilled tradespeople not deserve the same respect as other professions such as lawyers, teachers, accountants, doctors, nurses, foresters, real estate agents, social workers and architects, all of which have similar self-regulating bodies?

I received a certificate recently here in the Legislature for 50 years of paying my dues to my association, Professional Engineers Ontario. I'll tell you that this association has made sure that engineering in Ontario has had a high quality. We're known throughout the world for our engineering, and we really thank the association that we belong to. I think the fee is around \$240 a year now, which seems a lot. Even though I'm not a practising engineer, I continue to pay it because I believe in these associations.

Our government feels that these decisions must be made in a transparent, public and fair way. My constituents in Ottawa-Orléans, and indeed all Ontarians,

deserve nothing less than transparency and fairness. They deserve nothing less than to have the best possible value of the College of Trades available to them. This cannot happen if important decisions setting apprenticeship ratios are made behind closed doors, with no requirement for industry consultation. There's no labour market study that supports a claim that imposing a ratio of 1 to 1 on all trades would create 200,000 new jobs, which we've heard from the opposition. In fact, the chair of the College of Trades, former PC MPP Ron Johnson, has recognized that the PCs' blanket call to mandate 1-to-1 ratios is "absurd," adding that the Tory numbers of job creation under proposed a 1-to-1 ratio are "misleading," and that about 150,000 skilled jobs would be created over four years anyway, without changing a thing.

Mr. Speaker, our government has set the stage to continue expanding the apprenticeship system, just as it has been doing over the past nine years. In Ontario, there are more than 120,000 apprentices learning a trade today, which is 60,000 more than in 2002-03.

I can see that I am coming to the end of my time, and I thank you, Speaker, for this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you, everybody, for being here today. And I'd like to say to our passionate member from Simcoe North that I'm pleased to rise to speak today to Bill 22, the Helping Ontarians Enter the Skilled Trades Act, brought forward by, again, our member from Simcoe North.

Bill 22 would modernize Ontario's apprenticeship system and create new apprentice jobs by balancing the ratio of journeyman to apprentice. The apprenticeship system often requires multiple journeymen to train a single apprentice. If passed, Bill 22 would make those ratios 1 to 1.

We're well into the seventh year that Ontario's unemployment rate has been soaring above the national average, and one shortcoming in the economy that is flagged repeatedly by analysts is a skilled trades shortage. The government's own Minister of Finance predicts that this province will face a skilled trades shortage of over one million vacancies by 2021. Ontario is producing 46% fewer tradespeople per capita than the rest of Canada.

The government's response to the skilled trades shortage has been to create a different kind of work: bureaucracy. This government rolled out legislation to form the Ontario College of Trades, a body tasked with modernizing the apprenticeship and trades system. Its mandatory membership fee will hit tradespeople with what is essentially an annual trades tax of \$60 to \$120. Thanks to the college, employers will also be subjected to an additional trades tax hit, starting in 2014. The college has become fixated on building walls and imposing measures that will ultimately result in fewer tradespeople and higher costs for consumers. Because everyone will have to be an accredited contractor, you can forget about multi-taskers. Instead, you'll be forced to choose between an army of contractors or black-market workers.

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A more serious side effect is that employers will have a harder time recruiting qualified workers. The Globe and Mail reported earlier this week that many employers are unable to find suitable skilled workers, even while roughly a quarter of recent grads are underemployed or unemployed.

We've also seen any number of industry players come out against the College of Trades. Almost 90% of tradespeople and employers have come out against the College of Trades.

We've also seen an impressive number of stakeholders come out in support of my colleague's private member's bill. Merit Ontario, the Ontario Home Builders' Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce are all in support of Bill 22.

This government can't find the willpower to make new jobs for young workers its top priority. Thankfully, we on the other side of this House are still bringing forward solutions. Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: This is something close to my heart. I have three trades. I was an industrial mechanic/welder/fitter for over 30 years. I've had apprentices. What this isn't dealing with is the fact that you have first-, second- and third-year apprentices.

When I was a journeyman, if I had a first-year apprentice, I had to keep an eye on him a good part of the time so he was safe and didn't get injured on the job, as opposed to a third-year apprentice who had been around, had been on many job sites and had a lot more experience as a third-year apprentice. This person would be—I'd have to spend less time, because he would know what to do because he had already been with me or trained on those positions. That's a big difference, and that's not mentioned here.

They can talk about ratios, but you've got to talk about first-, second- and third-year apprentices—big difference. Because a third-year apprentice then becomes a journeyman a few months later, and he's on his own and he's got the same qualifications, or at least should have—not the experience that I have, but he certainly has the qualifications according to Ontario. So that's a big difference; that's not in there.

Let's talk about safety. Safety is very important on the job. If you increase the number of apprentices to 1 to 1, you put three journeymen on a job—it could be a fairly big job. You put three apprentices, who could be first-year apprentices—it might be second-year; it depends. Now those journeymen are going to spend a part of their time making sure the kid is all right. They're going to make sure he doesn't get in trouble, doesn't lose fingers, doesn't lose hands, especially when you're rigging. I mean, rigging—you're lifting 10,000-tonne items and machinery. I've seen apprentices lose fingers and arms over the 30 years I've been in because the journeyman may have sent him to do something on his own and

couldn't be over top of him at all times because the company was pushing. They wanted it done; they wanted it done fast. They wanted to save money. Whether anyone wants to admit it or not, this is about money, about getting cheaper labour, because they don't have to pay the apprentice as much as they pay their journeyman.

All the ratios are different in Ontario for different trades. Some might be 3 to 1, it might be 2 to 1, it might be 4 to 1, depending on the discipline. But when you get into some of the technical trades that require torches, using oxygen, acetylene, using high-rigging devices, come-alongs—all the things we use in the trades that require experience as well as the knowledge of how to at least start it. There's a lot of learning over a four-year apprenticeship.

I'm not sure that they've got it right yet. I certainly want to see a lot of young people working. I want to see more apprentices in the trades. I want to see them get to journeyman status so they can make good money, too. But while you're doing that, you've got to be safe.

This is a very simplistic answer, and I'm quite surprised if there are any tradesmen over there—and I think there are—who would be supporting this in its present form. We can make changes to put younger people back to work in apprenticeship programs, but we've got to do it right, Speaker, and this isn't the way to do it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today.

If there's a good point to this bill—and I have to admit right from the start, there's not a lot of good about it. But if there is any good about it, it's that it started a discussion on skilled trades in the province of Ontario, which is something that I think we need to do much, much more of.

I'm a very strong supporter of the College of Trades. I'll tell you why. I'm not a tradesperson myself, but I was raised in a trades family. My father was a skilled tradesperson. He wasn't a plumber; he was a steamfitter. He worked with Local 46 in Toronto, and he worked on a lot of the nuclear plants—on Pickering and on Bruce. My dad was a man who believed in training, believed in safety, believed in self-determination and believed in dignity. I know my father would have loved the College of Trades, because it advanced what he considered to be an integral part of the post-secondary establishment in the province of Ontario: It advanced the skilled trades into that.

Too often, I think, we've looked at somebody going into the trades as a second choice, as somehow it wasn't good enough. You couldn't go to college or you couldn't go to university. Or you did go to college or you did go to university, and then somehow you happened to go into the trades. I don't think that's the right way to look at it, and certainly my father didn't.

But for some reason the criticism that's coming from the College of Trades, which allows the industry and the tradespeople themselves to make decisions that are im-

portant to their old profession—somehow the Conservatives seem to be saying that it's okay for teachers to have their own college, but it's not okay for electricians to have their own college. It's okay for a dental hygienist to have the dignity of their own college and their own profession, but it's not okay for a plumber. Somehow, the professions that have colleges today are smart enough to have colleges, and the tradespeople can't make those decisions; it's got to be made by government.

I don't buy that, Speaker. I think young people who are entering the trades are smart, intelligent people who are making a smart career choice. As they move through that career choice, as they move down that career path, I think they should be the ones who are making decisions about such things as ratios. Nobody knows more about this than the tradespeople themselves, the journeypersons and the people engaged in the industry.

I would say to the gentlemen who have joined us today in support of this bill to be careful. This could be a wolf in sheep's clothing. Believe me, the College of Trades is the way to go, in my opinion, to ensure we've got a strong supply of apprentices in the future. It's an integral part of a healthy economy.

The ratios, for example—that's not all the College of Trades will be doing, but that seems to be the focus of debate today—are all different for each one of the trades, and that's how it should be. The simplistic approach that's used in other provinces simply will not work, I believe, in a complex economy like Ontario's. I think we need to have the tradespeople themselves looking at it.

There are people in the nursing profession saying, "I have a college of nursing, but you can't have it because you're a tradesperson? What's wrong with you?" What's wrong with these tradespeople? Why can't they have a college? It seems to me that the proof is in the pudding. It's good enough for one but not good enough for the other?

I think the tradespeople I've talked to in the province of Ontario and those people who instruct our tradespeople in the community colleges are extremely supportive of this. They're supportive of the approach, and they buy into the argument that nobody knows more about the trades than the people involved in the trade itself.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 22, the Helping Ontarians Enter the Skilled Trades Act. First of all, I want to applaud the member from Simcoe North, the PC skilled trades and apprenticeship reform critic, for his tremendous work on this bill and the trade skills file as a whole.

At a time when Ontario is facing a jobs and debt crisis, I think we can all agree that a primary goal of government is to help create good jobs in the province. In Chatham-Kent-Essex, we've lost over 10,000 jobs since 2003. Coincidentally, that just happens to be the year the Liberals formed the government.

As our leader, Tim Hudak, pointed out yesterday, the unemployment rate amongst youth today is 16.2%. Our

government should be doing everything it can to make it easier for qualified young Ontarians to enter the skilled trades. This bill will modernize Ontario's antiquated apprenticeship system and create 200,000 new jobs by reducing the ratio of journeymen to apprentices to 1 to 1.

Recently, I chatted with a constituent of mine, Brian Wright. We spoke about this proposed change, and I asked him for his thoughts. Wright's Electric has been in Chatham for a good long time; 64 years, as a matter of fact. They employ 13 people at the moment. They know the community; they know the industry. When I asked him for his opinion on getting the apprenticeship ratios down to 1 to 1, he told me that he was very impressed. He said, "There are people who could get jobs if this was changed. And there are people who cannot get jobs if this remains the same. Ontario is way behind on this issue. I could never figure that one out; it just doesn't make any sense to me." Ontario, in fact, is well behind, with a majority of other provinces already having lower apprenticeship ratios.

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Brian also told me that the people in the industry want this. It's good for job creation, it's good for students and it is good for the public.

Speaker, there are many ways to create the right environment for businesses to grow. In this case, lowering the ratios to 1 to 1 will allow for smaller companies to create jobs by being able to bring in more apprentices. Government needs to get out of the way and stop telling businesses what they need to do. Instead, they should listen to what they've been asking for. Our young people need jobs, especially in the skilled trades field. Wake up, government, and let the small business owners, who drive the Ontario economy, do what they do best. So either get on the right track or get out of the way.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: First, I want to brag a little bit. My daughter is an apprentice. She's going to be an electrician in about two weeks. She is just about to write her final exam and we're really proud of her. She comes from a long family—her dad, my husband, is an electrician, and so is her grandfather an electrician. We're really proud of her.

But the reason I'm standing up is that I know there will be lots of tradespeople listening, and lots of apprentices. I want you to go to mysudbury.ca. If you have an apprenticeship or a licence in anything—in bricklaying, in electrical, in building, in plumbing, welding, any trades at all—we need you in Sudbury. We have over 200 small businesses that support the mining industry. Sudbury is a great town to be in. If you are in a trade or thinking about a trade, please come: mysudbury.ca. We need you all. There is room for all the apprentices out there. Please come.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm delighted to take part in this debate and delighted to find out that the member from

Nickel Belt's daughter is looking to become an electrician—an apprentice, skilled trades—

M^{me} France Gélinas: In two weeks she's done.

Hon. Brad Duguid: In two weeks she's done. I think that's tremendous, and I think that speaks well of members who are actually putting their words into actions. When you think about it, we talk about telling others that we want to encourage our young people to go into the skilled trades, but is that what we're telling our own kids? I can tell you, I've got two young fellows, one that's in grade 11 and one that's in grade 12. I myself, too, am trying to get them to look at that option. I'm not going to tell them what to do. I couldn't tell them what to do. I never want to tell them what to do, because that's not going to work.

Interjection.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Well, one of them is a hockey player.

But the fact is that we want them to have options, we want them to look at every option, and we don't want them to look at the skilled trades as a backup option or not the first option. They are all very good opportunities for our young people, whether they take the college route, the university route, a combination thereof, or the skilled trades, which often involves a college education and sometimes even a university education. I think the choice needs to be left up to them, but we need to get rid of this stigma when it comes to the skilled trades.

One of the things when I was Minister of Labour—I know I'm off topic here a bit, but that makes me excited, because when I was Minister of Labour many years ago, one of the things that I really tried to become a champion of was encouraging women to get into the skilled trades. We have a pending skilled trades shortage in some of those areas. If we're only focusing on half the population to deal with that, I don't think that's a very effective or smart strategy. I just want to say to the member, congratulations to you and your daughter. I wish her all the best.

I say to the members in the House, I am pleased that we're talking about apprenticeships here. I think it's important that we do everything we can to promote apprenticeships.

As I said earlier in question period today, this government is really proud of the fact we've been a champion of expanding apprenticeships across the province, and we've done that very, very successfully. We've gone from 60,000 apprenticeships now to 120,000. Our record, frankly, is unrivaled when it comes to any government that's come before us, of all political stripes. It's something we're very, very proud of.

I would say to the members opposite that I appreciate the fact you've brought this forward. I think, though, that the plan that you're coming forward with is a simplistic plan to deal with a very complex problem. When I see politicians bring forward simplistic plans to deal with complex problems, I think we have to be very leery of that.

The other thing I would say is that we've gone past this. You're looking at making a decision in the old way,

where the politicians here at Queen's Park would make the decision based on whatever their priorities might be. Who knows what those priorities are? God forbid—but we're politicians; some of those priorities may be political. Some of those decisions may be made in the backrooms here at Queen's Park. I don't think that's the way to make those decisions.

I think things like apprenticeship ratios should be made by experts, those that know the skilled trades. They should be made by the people in the industry itself. I have confidence in their views. I have confidence in their intelligence. I have confidence in the fact that I think they can self-govern as well as any other profession in this province that gets that opportunity. That's why we agreed to create the College of Trades.

When it comes to apprenticeship ratios, the College of Trades has moved very quickly. Already they've reduced ratios in six different areas. When you compare it, as I said this morning, to the record of the party opposite—they've done six already in the eight years they've been in existence; in the eight years that that party was in office, they did zero.

I'm glad to see that they are supporting the apprenticeships. I hope they continue to do that. I commend the member on the work that he does to promote apprenticeships. I suggest that it would probably be more effective if he were to work with us on these issues, but I thank him for bringing this forward. We don't agree with the way he wants to go about doing this, though.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased to rise and add my comments to Bill 22, An Act to amend the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Stop the clock.

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, it has been quiet all along, so I'd ask you to come to order. The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, I'd ask you to come to order.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. I'll continue. Just wait till the horse racing debate; you haven't seen anything yet.

I've just got a few points to make before I let my colleague beside me speak. I just can't believe the arrogance coming from the government side and from the NDP, the fact that Alberta and Saskatchewan, who have a control on their spending, who have strong economies, are doing it right with apprenticeship ratios, but we can't do it here in Ontario. We have a deficit of \$13 billion; we've got \$200 billion in debt. Let's follow the other provinces. Let's get our apprenticeships to the right ratios. Let's create some jobs.

I find it funny, the coalition speaking together, and the left side of the coalition yelling out, "You can't do this. You've got to have a plan." You want to find jobs for the youth. What is the best way to find jobs for the youth but to make the apprenticeship ratios 1 to 1? They act like

spoiled children: "Gimme, gimme, gimme, but I'm not going to give you any plans." It's time to come out with your plan of action and get this economy back on track.

My brother is an electrician. He'd love to hire people, to train them, to improve the economy of Woodstock, the member from Oxford's area, but he can't, because he's a one-man show. He's got lots of work, and he'd like to bring it on. His own son had to leave this province to find work out west, and I find that disgusting. It's about time the government and the left side got together and supported us. Let's get these ratios 1 to 1 and get this economy back on track.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would just say to the honourable member that if all they did was stop voting no on everything and actually tried to get a deal with the government, maybe then they could get some changes.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Chatham–Kent–Essex, come to order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They can't stand in this House, vote no on everything, then propose something and not be prepared to work to try to make the change. That's the first point I would make.

The other thing I just want to say: I'm an electrician by trade—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Stop the clock.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The opposition, you had your chance to speak; I would ask you to listen now.

The member for Timmins–James Bay.

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Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to make two points. First of all, I'm an electrician by trade. I apprenticed in the mining sector, which has no ratios; there are zero ratios. You can have no journeymen and have all apprentices. That's the environment that I worked in, and I've got to tell you, it was not a very good one, because the department that I went into—I think there were 10 or 12 people who started as apprentices; there were only two or three of us who ever got our licence. Why? Most of the guys who went off to trade school were not able to pass at trade school because they did not have the type of mentoring they needed in the workplace.

The second part is, the employer would purposely push people out to bring in junior apprentices, in order to pay lesser wages.

So there's a real issue on this side. I think the Conservatives have to take a look at some of the realities.

The other thing I want to mention is an experience that I had with the super-trades. We're in the mining sector, and they had what they called super-trades, where an electrician could become a mechanic as well, or vice versa. They would put people in harm's way by not providing the training. A good friend of mine died as a result of electrocution. He was a mechanic who wanted to work

in a substation, who, quite frankly, wasn't trained to be able to do so. So there is a safety issue.

The last point I would make—there is a real issue here. What do we do in small-town, rural, northern Ontario, where there are small contractors who don't have the pool of labour to be able to attract journeymen? There are people like Lacroix Plumbing and others that I know who are trying to get people to come and work but they can't find the journeymen.

If we want to sit down and deal with this from the perspective of how to deal with safety adequately and how to resolve the issue of small-town, rural, northern Ontario, where there isn't the amount of people that you need as journeymen to be able to hire, then let's sit down and have that discussion and figure out how to find a practical solution to it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today in support of my colleague the member for Simcoe North and his bill, Bill 22, Helping Ontarians Enter the Skilled Trades Act, 2013.

This member has been the strongest advocate in the province, in our party, for the tradespeople. I thank them for coming here today. They've been here many times before: for the member for Simcoe North's bill; for my motions; to try to get the government to understand that you need to modernize the apprenticeship system in Ontario—it's archaic.

Reducing the required ratio of journeymen to apprenticeships from three or more to a 1-to-1 ratio will create thousands of new apprenticeship opportunities and employ our young people. The dichotomy between the two—the need for skilled labour and the high unemployment of youth—can help be matched by this. I don't know why the government and the third party do not see these opportunities. The young people of my riding want jobs. They can't get into apprenticeships at all, because the current system is out of date; it's a bottleneck. The ratio is going to help.

The member who just spoke, Mr. Bisson, said we can have a discussion—so we're having the discussion here today. He has been very passionate about this. But the reality is, thousands of our young people are entering the workforce and have left Ontario, as described by my colleague and seatmate. He gave a perfect example, a family example. That is what's happening. I don't understand why you're not understanding that.

Those skilled trades have been highly valued. We need to promote them more, as the member from Simcoe North has done. It is a great-paying job. Whenever I go into the high schools, into the career classes, young people want to know what to get into. I say, "You've got to look at skilled trades." Even the women in skilled trades—it's a great profession for women, and the member from Nickel Belt mentioned that. Promoting women in skilled trades—it's a good job. But under this government and their College of Trades, which has been men-

tioned here, the opportunities just aren't there for young people.

In rural ridings like mine, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, we have a higher-than-average unemployment rate than the rest of the province. The province of Ontario has had the highest unemployment rate of all of Canada for six years running or more now. Is somebody not going to connect the dots over there, that we can provide opportunities for our young people in the trades? We're driving them out of the province. We're not creating those spaces for them.

I don't know if you read the Toronto Star—I'm sure all the members of the government have read the Toronto Star—but recently, "Jobs Mismatch a Ticking 'Time Bomb,'" "Skills Gap 'a Huge Issue'"—the story is in there about a major Ontario manufacturer that needed to hire 50 new skilled machinists and electricians and they couldn't find qualified workers in the ranks of the over 500,000 unemployed in the province. Instead, they had to go to the Philippines.

When I was up in northern Ontario this summer, they were saying, "Send us your young." They want to train young people. They need young people in the skilled trades. Mining companies were going as far away as Africa to get people to work in the mines.

Rick Miner has written many books. He estimates that by 2036, nearly two thirds of our population will be over 65 and under 15. In fact, within the next 10 years Ontario could be short over a million skilled workers. To borrow a phrase from Mr. Miner, "We're seeing a trend of people without jobs and jobs without people."

We have repeated this several times. We have brought private members' bills and motions to the floor of the Legislature. Would you please move on with changing our archaic apprenticeship system and help our young people find jobs. Get your head out of the sand. The province needs to change the apprenticeship ratio. Listen up and make that choice today and support the member from Simcoe North.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Simcoe North, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank all 11 or 12 people who made comments today on this private member's bill and to address a couple of things.

First of all, I think I read the report earlier about the health and safety issues. That was a study done by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. They specifically said that there's no impact on the chamber of commerce.

Mr. Paul Miller: They're business. That's why. They're business.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Yes, and it's too bad. It's too bad we actually have businesses that want to make money and create jobs. Isn't it too bad? It's really bad. To the member from Hamilton East, isn't it too bad that we want to create jobs? Go away. You're disgusting.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Simcoe North, speak through the Chair.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: As far as the member from Oakville and the minister, they're more concerned about their College of Trades—Ronnie Johnson and Pat Dillon and the boys. That's what they are all worried about. But you'll get lots of chance on the opposition day motion on April 10 to discuss this as well, because we want to abolish it. It's a waste of time; it's a waste of taxpayers' dollars. You know that.

Look, the place is full of people here today. Many of them are people from the racing industry whom you've also put out of work, so they'll be able to go and take apprenticeships as well.

You can babble away all you want over there, but you know nothing about this file. I've told you that a dozen times. You know nothing about it. You know nothing about this file, Minister. Go and learn what's happening in Ontario. Find out from these people. Find out from the business people, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, all the people that actually create jobs and work in Ontario and make this economy run while you try dragging it down with crazy decisions like on the horse racing industry: the Slots at Racetracks Program. Just how pathetic are they over there?

What have we got here today? We've got the coalition agreeing with them. They're back to it. You can have Ornge and you can have all these cancelled gas plants, but you know what? They'll take it every time because they want to side with the coalition. It's all about the coalition now. They don't want an election and get rid of these cons over here. They want to support them all the way.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, this is your last warning.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Simcoe North.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'm not going to start the next debate until we have quiet in the House.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, you're not helping.

I think I received a forewarning from many of you that this next debate will be very rowdy. Let me assure you that I will maintain discipline. So I'm giving you a forewarning right now.

GAMING POLICY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the following principles should be immediately applied to the province's gaming policy:

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(1) implementation of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.'s transformation of gaming strategy be suspended

until after the 2014 municipal elections in order to allow municipalities wanting to be a host site for a casino to undertake a referendum on the issue on or before the 2014 ballot;

(2) a panel composed of representatives nominated by the three recognized parties be tasked with hearing from stakeholders and drafting fair spending limits for parties taking part in the referendum on casinos;

(3) changes to the Slots at Racetracks partnership be frozen in order to enable the horse racing industry to continue to operate while the government engages the industry in a robust consultation with the goal of ensuring its survival, stability and growth; and

(4) current funds from unclaimed purses due to race-track closures be made available to local or community racetracks.

I so move.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Natyshak has moved private members' notice of motion number 15. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Before I begin, from the outset, I have some people I'd like to acknowledge who have helped me along the way to learn more about this industry and to advocate on behalf of it. Number one, I'd like to thank our leader, Andrea Horwath, and my NDP caucus. They—

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's already starting. You know, Mr. Speaker, they will not only—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. The member for Lanark, you've been warned before. This is your second warning and the last one. I opened the debate by saying I expected this, and I expect to maintain order.

Mr. Natyshak.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, they can choose to not show me any respect, but what they are doing is not showing the people who came here today and took the time out of their days any respect. This is an opportunity for us to have this debate, so I hope they will oblige this House.

I'd like to thank our leader, Andrea Horwath, who actually—this bill piggybacks on what she introduced in October. Unfortunately, it was killed due to prorogation. I'd like to thank members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada: Christopher Wilson, Sharon DeSousa, Theo Lagakos.

Members of the Ontario Harness Horse Association: Jim Whelan, Brian Tropea, Christine Arlidge, Ken Hardy, Mark Horner, Paul Lindsey, who have met with me countless times and informed me. It's wonderful to have their support.

Members of the Ontario Horse Racing Industry Association: Sue Leslie, Anna Meyers, Glenn Sikura. Also individuals whom I've met in person, met with many times and also virtually over the Internet: Anita and Brad Fritz, thank you, guys; Bob McIntosh; Dr. John McKinley; Leo Thibideau; Dr. Mark Biederman; Bob

and Veronica Ladouceur; Mark Williams; Paul Branton; the mayor of Lakeshore, Tom Bain; Roy Steele; Jaime Higgs—who at this moment is awaiting the delivery of his first child; it's really a remarkable thing and we congratulate him—Brittany Kennedy; Marilyn Heald; Darin Kennedy; Ken Szijarto; Doris Middleton; Jason Mitchell; Ron Mitchell; Jane Mitchell; Ellie Mahew; Karen Duck, who is celebrating her birthday today—happy birthday, Karen; Ashley Keer; and Kurt Hick.

I want to thank those from the industry who have taken the time out of their lives to be here today in support of this motion. Your presence here today humbles me.

Those who have worked with me on this issue over the past year will know that I speak frankly, so expect that from me again today.

This is an important debate. It will allow us elected officials of this House to firmly express our position on not only the future of horse racing, but the future of gaming in this province.

You see, as we've tried to analyze the rationale behind the decision to end the SARP program, we can come to no logical conclusion. Why destroy a partnership that was successful in creating 30,000 full-time jobs? Why end a program that delivered over \$1 billion per year to government coffers? Why obliterate an agreement that was responsible for billions more in economic activity for rural Ontario? The old adage says, "When nothing else makes sense, follow the money." So where is the money?

Gaming is inherently a risky business. It is, in fact, the business of risk. Hedging your bets and stacking the decks always puts the odds in the house's favour. If the house always wins, and we, the people, are the house, then why sell the farm? That's where the lure of a quick payout and a sure bet has enticed the Liberal government to go all in on private casino expansion. This was and is and continues to be about big private casinos eliminating the competition and seizing that market share. This was a hostile takeover by the OLG, sanctioned by the Liberal government and orchestrated by privateers. The power and influence of the casino capitalists are palpable in our communities, and an army of high-paid lobbyists has descended on potential host communities with a singular focus: to get the deals done and to start raking in the profits.

That's why this motion calls on the government to establish a tri-partisan committee to set spending and intervenor status limits to ensure that a municipal referendum is conducted in a fair and transparent way.

It's private business. It's not their fault. Their motives are clear. It's the meaning of their existence. Do I think that private casinos could be more successful than publicly run casinos? Well, in fact, I do think that they would be extremely efficient at drawing in gamblers on the hopes of a big payout—only to fleece communities out of busloads of money to send to a vault somewhere in Las Vegas.

But is that where we want to go as a province? Is it good and responsible public policy? We in the NDP say

no. We say it is the responsibility of the government to weigh the risks and rewards of gaming expansion and to temper that desire for a quick payout with the knowledge that the socio-economic impacts of gambling often result in terrible effects that most often municipalities have to shoulder the financial burdens of dealing with. That's why this motion calls on the government to ensure that a municipal referendum takes place prior to any casino expansion to give the people a say as to whether they want a casino in their area or not—a right and a process that previously existed, but was eliminated by the Liberal government to further pave the way for privatization.

This motion today gives the other parties the clear opportunity to state their position on private casino expansion, and I hope they do, because the other two parties subscribe quite clearly to the doctrine of privatization.

I would like to know and I hope we all hear how—how—this secures the future of the horse racing industry in this province. You will probably not hear that plan fully articulated by the opposition parties during this debate. You will undoubtedly hear that this all could have been averted with an election. I would ask you to think about that. As difficult and emotional as this issue is, would a PC plan to privatize all gaming in the province of Ontario be any better than a Liberal plan to privatize all gaming in the province of Ontario? Because from where I sit, that is precisely the reason that horse racing is in the position that it is. They are one and the same.

You see, this was never about SARP. The call for transparency was a misdirection. The terms of SARP were always available for public scrutiny. Unlike the deals that are currently being negotiated under a cloak of secrecy, SARP was wholly transparent. Could it have been refined? Could it have been more tightly regulated? I think those in the industry would fully admit that we could have done more to refine it, to add some benchmarks on service delivery—absolutely. But as I've said many times before, the program did not have to be blown up to infuse those measures of transparency and measures of benchmarks into the program. But again, this was never about SARP. It's a clear example of how with enough money, power and influence, you can eliminate the competition.

So where are we? Since last year, the Premier has resigned, the finance minister has parachuted into a soft landing on Bay Street, and we still have no plan; we have maybes. "Maybe historic gaming machines will replace slots revenue. Maybe a sportsbook could enhance a product line. Maybe a V75 wager could be introduced."

1550

It's well known that the transition panel reported that the industry would not be able to survive without government intervention. It's ironic that SARP was never a subsidy, but was perpetuated as such by the minions. However, the new government will most definitely be required to inject hundreds of millions of dollars in short-term funding to achieve half the levels of activity once

found in the industry. That's why my motion calls on this government to suspend the cancellation of SARP until the industry can negotiate a reasonable transition product or series of products to make up for what was lost.

I haven't spoken about the breeding side, but undoubtedly what was once a world-class industry revered around the world for its quality of stock has been obliterated, frozen by this government's decision, arbitrarily and without consultation, to change the rules of the game. Yearling sales last year were reduced by nearly 50% year-over-year, and we can only expect that trend to continue.

This is why my motion requires the government to secure orphaned purse monies and direct them to community organizations such as the Lakeshore horse racing group, who are developing a plan to operate a community-based non-profit racetrack and schedule for the Leamington Raceway—and eventually a new track, if feasible. That money should go to the horsemen, who are committed to the preservation of the industry, and not back into OLG coffers.

Of course, the nature of this motion, if passed, indicates the will of the majority of the democratically elected members of this House. It will be up to the government to decide to abide by their will or to deny democracy and deny the democratic process of the people, the very fundamental pillar of our society. To ignore this directive would disenfranchise all Ontarians who put their faith in us.

The debate is no longer about blame. Those arguments have been made and have surely played out in the court of public opinion. What this motion does is allow the government to acknowledge that their actions have had deep consequences, and that those consequences have been devastating to a group of people who did nothing to deserve it. It allows us members to acknowledge this and to attempt to remedy this issue.

The original architects of this plan are no longer here to set policy. You have the opportunity—you, on the government side—to do the right thing, to save a wonderful industry. This motion gives you the space to do that, and I hope you will.

I urge you to do something historic. I urge you to do the right thing: Support this motion. The very fabric of rural Ontario relies on it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Essex for putting forth his motion here today. At the outset, because there is a court case pending between Windsor Raceway and OLG, I can't comment on the court case, but I have offered my assistance to the member to work with him on his Leamington project, and that offer stands this afternoon.

I'm pleased to discuss the horse racing industry in Ontario and the work our government has been doing to ensure a sustainable, transparent and accountable industry. Our government is committed to supporting a sustainable racing industry that is fair to industry partners

and the people of this great province. That is why we convened three distinguished former Ontario cabinet ministers—Elmer Buchanan, John Snobelen and John Wilkinson—to prepare a report and determine—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I can't let you carry on; it'll just get out of hand. The member for Haliburton-Brock: You've been warned. The member for Lambton-Kent: You've been warned.

Hon. Jeff Leal: This panel, building on work that was done by the Sadinsky report—they did fantastic work consulting with the industry and providing findings that outlined a clear path forward.

Here are some of the findings from the panel. The panel found “that it would be a mistake to reinstate SARP.... The program has provided far more money than was needed to stabilize the industry—its original purpose—and has done so without compelling the industry to invest in a better consumer experience.... The panel concluded that a viable world-class industry requires public investment, though substantially less than the industry has received from SARP.”

In response to the report, our government is moving forward with these recommendations. We're guided by the panel's report on SARP, which calls for a program that was previously, as John Snobelen said, bad public policy, unaccountable, not transparent, creating a fractious industry that lost focus on its customers.

We put in place transition funding to help the industry find a way forward with a plan to ensure long-term sustainability for the industry. We've asked the horse racing transition panel and industry to work together so that there will be more than 800 days of racing this year, subject to approval of the Ontario Racing Commission.

We've had tremendous success. We've reached agreements with nine tracks in the province of Ontario: Woodbine, Mohawk, Western Fair, Grand River, Clinton, Hanover, Georgian Downs, Flamboro Downs and Fort Erie Race Track. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to announce that—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Leeds–Grenville, you're warned.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to announce that this afternoon at precisely 3:30 it was posted that racing dates have now been provided by the Ontario Racing Commission for the 2013 calendar.

Negotiations are ongoing. We're hoping to have more transition agreements in place to ensure that racing continues. We're willing to talk to any track that has a licence, a desire to continue racing and provides the required financial data to support this great industry.

Mr. Speaker, I want to have a couple of quotes from some people. I want to quote Dennis Mills, president and CEO of Racing Future Inc.: “After just a month in office, Premier Wynne is showing that she really understands both the horse racing industry and the gaming industry, and how the right interplay between the two can benefit

the public interest and" the great economy in the rural part of our province.

Mark Wales, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture: "The horse racing industry is vital to Ontario's economy, representing 60,000 jobs throughout rural Ontario. The transition funding will provide much-needed stability for the industry while a long-term sustainable model is developed that ensures the future of the Ontario horse racing industry."

Mr. Speaker, we listened to the people in the field. Premier Wynne announced just recently reintegrating horse racing to the Ontario Lottery Corp. Over the next little while, we'll be looking at that portion of proceeds for OLG to make sure that there's a section available to make sure that we keep this industry very sustainable in the province of Ontario.

We're looking at ways—I just have a number of supportive quotes here from Sue Leslie and others. Certainly, today, we announced the transition program for Fort Erie, of course a track that was built in 1896; and Georgian Downs in Barrie, Ontario, which was formed originally by Earl Rowe, who was a very distinguished Lieutenant Governor in the province of Ontario and, in fact, was a federal member of Parliament for a period of time.

We're working very closely with the panel. John Snobelen has done an outstanding job. He was at the cabinet table when the original Slots at Racetracks Program was brought in. He himself has said it was a program that was not transparent, was not accountable, and he certainly has provided great advice to the panel, along with Elmer Buchanan, a very distinguished former agriculture minister in the province of Ontario, and John Wilkinson, of course, who served so ably on this side of the House. These are hard-working individuals who are out in the field, who are getting the job done, who are putting transition agreements in place to make sure that we have a world-class horse racing industry in the province of Ontario. That is so important.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to correct the record. The announcement today was dealing with April dates only, so I think that's very important. We'll keep negotiating with the Ontario Racing Commission to get the rest of the dates in place.

I also want to make reference to a Toronto Star article, "Ontario Government Feeds Cash to Three Racetracks" to keep a sustainable industry going in the province of Ontario.

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Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude. We're doing the right thing. We're putting a plan in place. Horse racing will remain a very important part of the rural economy in this great province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is my pleasure to join the debate today on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and to commit our support to this motion and our continued support to the Ontario horse racing industry.

I'm proud to be a member of a party that has stood up for this industry throughout the past year. Our critic, Monte McNaughton, put forward a ground-breaking piece of legislation, that died in prorogation, to make sure local communities would have more say. He supported me in my effort to have the Auditor General review the OLG's decision. And it was our party's white paper that reconfirmed its commitment to Ontario horse racing to make sure it remains a viable and important agricultural community.

Speaker, I know many of the people in this House understand that I've taken this decision by the Liberal-NDP government very personally. There are 1,000 jobs in my riding, in Nepean-Carleton, at the Rideau Carleton Raceway; many of those people are watching at home today. I want to continue to commit to fight on their behalf.

As I said, there are 1,000 people. I want to tell you four stories.

Rick Sullivan is a trainer and an owner of a practice facility who had just built a new barn for his racing facility with a \$100,000 inheritance before the cancellation. He's now fighting liver cancer, and he's afraid that he has got no other recourse if the Slots at Racetracks Program ends.

Gary McDonald is a friend of mine, a 55-year-old driver. He has done this his entire life. He used to have five employees; he now has three. He's going to have to even let the rest of them go, including his own son. He's afraid he's going to lose his house.

Ted McDonald is another driver. He has no other trades experience. He tells me that he will either need to retrain or end up on Ontario Works. He had a stable which employed three people. Now they're all going to lose their job.

Then there's Jamie Copley. He's a trainer and a young father who just built a house, and he's afraid he is going to have to go to the United States to race in order to provide for his family. That is not just, that is not what we stand for in the Ontario PC Party, and these are real people who have been affected by the NDP-Liberal coalition.

The member from Essex needs to understand the consequences of his actions. By allowing the Liberal budget to pass last year, the budget that killed the SARP, he's complicit in destroying the industry and the lives—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I can't hear the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Neither can I.

Member for Nepean-Carleton, continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker. The member from Essex talks about respect until it's other people's turn to speak. He is absolutely complicit, and he should be aware that his actions have hurt the people I represent, like Rick, Gary, Ted and Jamie. The member is now trying to save face, to right his wrong, but it is too

little too late, and I find it, frankly, offensive that he would come here today and use these people and mislead them, because he is intentionally hurting the people I represent.

His actions on June 20, 2012, were shameful, when he allowed the budget to pass.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

I would ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdraw, Speaker.

Your actions today are giving false hope—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Just make it clear. I asked you to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn. Could we at least stop the clock?

The NDP could have offered a different course. They could have done a number of things. Last year, when Andrea Horwath was playing Let's Make a Deal with Dwight Duncan, she could have said, "Stop the cancellation of the SARP." She didn't. She has an opportunity right now to deal with the Liberals in this budget, but she didn't. And that member from Essex had an opportunity to vote against the budget last year and he didn't, Mr. Speaker. These members opposite are just as responsible for killing the SARP as that party opposite. Today, we are here because that Liberal-NDP coalition didn't give a second thought to the people I represent. The race days are over in some places across Ontario—just ask the people at Kawartha Downs.

The member for Essex, the NDP and the Liberals colluded together, Mr. Speaker, a year ago. They are responsible for what is happening in our communities, and I want to let them know that we will continue to stand up in the Ontario PC Party, and I'm proud to support Ontario horse racing.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please.

Further debate? The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to speak to the motion before us today, that was brought forward by the NDP MPP for the riding of Essex, Taras Natyshak, someone who has been diligent in his fight on behalf of the horse racing industry, as well as against the wrong-headed movements of the Liberal government in terms of their "modernization" of the gaming system in Ontario.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Huron—Bruce, you're warned.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm not here to huff and puff, and I'm not here to have demonstrations of inappropriate proportions, considering that actions are more important than demonstrations. You can talk all you want, you can huff and puff all you want, you can scream and shout all you want, but our job here in Legislature is to try to actually get results for people, and New Democrats have worked very hard to do exactly that.

In fact, we have been working very closely with the horse racing industry. We have been working very

closely with people in rural communities and communities across the province that are being devastated by the callous behaviour of the Liberal government when they decided—without even a blink of the eye—in a stroke of the pen to simply deep-six an industry that not only was an economic driver in rural Ontario, but actually has been a way of life for a lot of people across Ontario, including myself.

As I've said before, I can remember when I went with my own family—my dad and my other family members—to Flamboro Downs to watch the trots, check out the harness racing and participate in what then was a family outing, frankly. It was something we all enjoyed, and it's always been a big part of our community in the Hamilton area.

But when it comes to the modernization plan, as the Liberals call it, it's not really that at all. What it is, is a plan to have the private casino interests in the world—in North America—swoop in and take over all the opportunity when it comes to casino gaming in Ontario. What we see as a result is that the people who get squeezed out in that process are the horse racing industry. That's what this is all about. It's all about shutting down the horse racing industry in favour of the private casino group, and we think that is absolutely the wrong thing to do. We think it's wrong-headed, and we think that private casinos, first and foremost, are not the right thing for Ontario in terms of a solution.

What people need to do is ask the Conservatives whether they think private casinos and the privatization of gaming in Ontario is the right thing to do. I think you would find out very clearly that both the Liberals and the Conservatives agree that privatization of gaming—making sure the Donald Trumps of the world and the big American casinos come in here and take over Ontario's gaming system is exactly what both those parties want to do.

New Democrats are quite different. We actually don't believe that's the answer for Ontario. But we do believe the answer is to make sure we have a strong and vibrant horse racing industry in this province, and that we freeze right now this wrong-headed direction the Liberals have us on so that we can make sure that industry is actually strong and vibrant going forward; not for me, Speaker, not for you, and maybe not for any individual who's sitting in the seats of this Legislature. But for individuals who are sitting in this gallery, yes. For communities, for people, for small businesses, for breeders, for people who have stables, for trainers, for people who provide feed, it's not just a quirky, cute little thing called horse racing, it is an entire industry of people who get their livelihoods from that industry. That this government was so callous in its disregard for those people is shameful and disgraceful.

What we are trying to do is pull that out of the fire, because that's where it ended up. It ended up in the fire because the government decided they were going to simply toss away that entire group of folks, including the animals, frankly. We now have people who are not sure

whether they should be paying their bills to feed their families or paying their bills to feed their animals. That's the kind of situation people have been in for a while now, and it's unacceptable.

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What New Democrats say is, let's try to right the wrong that the Liberals have put in place. Let's try to cut through the bluster and the horse manure that comes from the opposition and actually look at some real, practical solutions to the problem we're in. The only way that we can do that is by supporting this motion and making sure that we're taking the proper time not only to make that industry strong again with a real plan but to actually make sure that we have a system in Ontario that allows everyday people to have a say on whether or not they want a casino shoved down their throats.

Let's not forget, that's the other piece of this motion. The Liberal government wants to hide and wants to pretend that they don't have a stake in all of this, when we know very much that their plan is to shove private casinos down the throats of communities that don't want them.

What we're saying is, take a chill pill, let the people of Ontario decide whether or not they want a casino that's going to change the face of their community forever, and let's have the real conversation—there I go; I said that word. Let's have a real discussion and planning with the horse racing industry so that we can come out of the chaos that we're in right now to a place that makes sense and that is reasonable and is actually respectful of the horse racing industry and respectful of Ontarians in terms of their choice around casinos. That's what this motion is about, and I hope the Liberals and Conservatives support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm happy to rise and speak on this bill and join in the debate this afternoon. I want to talk about modernizing the OLG, and I will take exception to the leader of the third party about what that means from her perspective.

Let's not forget that OLG provides \$2 billion to schools and hospitals each and every year. OLG's return to the province is the largest single source of revenue after taxes, and if we want to fluff that off, I think we have to be awfully careful. When you look at that number, \$2 billion to schools and hospitals every year is very significant.

The current business plan for OLG is old, more than 20 years old. It is time to bring this multi-million-dollar company into the current century. I know that because my grandmother, who only died a couple of years ago, thought OLG was only about buying a Wintario ticket, and she had no idea what else was involved. But she certainly appreciated the investment in the schools and the hospitals each and every year. So I do take exception with the leader of the third party. It is important that we keep looking at OLG and modernizing it.

When we look at the benefits of OLG—increased revenues to the province by \$1.3 billion a year to help fund those vital public services I spoke of; \$3 billion in new private sector capital investment; 2,300 net new jobs in the industry; and nearly 4,000 additional jobs in hospitality and retail sectors.

The thing to remember—and I think it has been stated before—is that we won't impose any kind of facility on municipalities that don't want to support one. We respect duly elected, democratic municipalities, city councils and so on. That is not what the Liberal government is all about. Municipalities will consult publicly with their constituents and pass resolutions.

We're not in the position of trying to ask municipalities to be hosts when they don't want to be hosts. Part of my area where I live has said no. Another part of my municipality has said yes. It's a democratic process, and we respect that.

We will continue to invest \$50 million each year in the provincial problem gambling program, because we are a fair and responsible government. It's about balance. All existing responsible gambling features—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): There's a lot of chatter going on on the left side of the House. I'd ask you to keep it down.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. It is hard to hear in the House.

All those responsible gambling features will be extended to new gaming sites and lottery offerings.

So what do our friends in the PC Party have to say? Hudak's plan to privatize the OLG is misguided, Speaker. A fire sale of the OLG will result in tax seepage and a drop in revenues that would affect the delivery of health care. Ontario has already suffered enough as a result of failed privatization schemes of the previous PC government. We, through the OLG, are seeking private sector agreements as they modernize Ontario in a careful and balanced manner—a careful and balanced manner. And instead of public consultation support, the PCs just want to take a heavy-handed approach.

As for the third party, there's not a lot to say other than we need to acknowledge in this healthy debate and discussion that it was the NDP government that started casino gambling, so to say they're not part of it isn't accurate. The NDP government opened the first casino in Ontario, in Windsor. So let's just acknowledge that we're all in this together. We are all in this together.

And if there's a party that doesn't want \$2 billion to schools and hospitals each year, I think we need to hear about that. It is the largest revenue source in Ontario.

We do need to modernize the OLG. It's time to do that; it hasn't been done in 20 years. We do need to engage people in this modernization process. We do need to strike the right balance, preserve our revenues and create a fair society for Ontarians. That's what we need to do—and keep those benefits coming from the OLG.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): There are a lot of members coming into the House because the vote will be held shortly. But I also ask you to keep quiet. Plus, several of you were already warned. So I hope you want to remain for the vote.

Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise in the debate today and speak to this private member's bill. I want to say right off that at the end of the day, I intend to support this motion, mainly for the horsemen and the trainers and the horse industry in this province.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm not voting for the coalition. I'm voting for the horsemen and the trainers and the industry.

In my community, there's Hiawatha Horse Park back in Sarnia, and Hiawatha has consistently been one of the best-run horse tracks in the province, generating over \$30 million in revenues in 2011. Obviously, there was a lot of shock back in my community a year ago March, when the Liberal government, with the support of the NDP, announced it would scrap that successful revenue-sharing agreement with the horse racing industry. In our community, this cost almost 300 jobs, between the OLG and the people who worked at Hiawatha.

Based on the signed contract with the city of Sarnia, the city of Sarnia received over \$24 million over the number of years that racing was in effect there, and they've still got a contract, hopefully, until 2015. This is a very important source of revenue for the city of Sarnia and, of course, those men and women who worked in the industry—the trainers, the breeders, and the people who ran small businesses in that community as well.

This sort of blatant disregard for the people of my community is common from the Liberal government of the last 10 years, but I was surprised when the NDP supported them in the loss of these jobs.

By dodging last year's budget vote, the NDP gave the green light to this Liberal government to gut the horse racing and breeding industry of this province.

The Minister of Rural Affairs brags that they're going to have 800 races in this province next year, but that's down from over 1,500 races in the previous year. Where are those horsemen going to race?

Mr. Speaker, I think my time is up, so I'm going to yield to my colleagues.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I speak in support of the motion brought forth by the member from Essex. When he speaks about a referendum, it means that people want to be able to have a say on casinos. That's what they had when we talked about Niagara and Windsor; they had a say.

What we had about a year ago was the ability of communities to be able to have a say in a referendum, until the Liberals quietly said, "We'd better slip that out of public view, and then make sure that cities have the

power to do it so that we don't have to take any responsibility for that particular issue."

1620

People want to be able to have a say on casinos. Governments have lost \$700 million in the last 10 years on casinos; they are not a great economic strategy. They are losing money. That's why you're modernizing; that's why you brought in—God bless—Godfrey, who is the privatizer par excellence, and that's why you're bringing in light-Liberal privatization as opposed to Tory-in-a-hurry privatization.

Horse racing is getting a temporary reprieve; that's all they're getting. It's a one-year reprieve until the election, and after that, who knows? But who were the ones negotiating to try to save the—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the speaker to speak through the Chair and not address the audience, because you've just incited the noise that's carrying on.

For a couple of members who are turning their backs at the Chair and figure they can shout: I recognize your voice.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And while we were negotiating to save the racetracks, what were the Tories doing? They absolutely had nothing to say. In that budget debate, they had nothing to say. Saying no to the budget meant that it was a brilliant cover to say nothing and do absolutely nothing. That's what they're about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Speaker, as you know, over the past year I have travelled throughout the province of Ontario. I've been to nearly every track in this province and have met with thousands and thousands of men and women who are involved in Ontario's horse racing industry.

The Liberals' rushed decision to cancel the successful Slots at Racetracks partnership, which was allowed to proceed with the help of the New Democratic Party here in Ontario, has put at risk some 60,000 jobs across our province. We're talking about 800 to 1,000 jobs in Dresden in my riding; 1,000 jobs at the Rideau Carleton Raceway near Ottawa; 800 jobs at Kawartha Downs in Peterborough; 2,000 jobs in Fort Erie; 12,000 jobs—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek: This is your final warning. Just turning away and hiding does not make it that I don't recognize you.

The member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Speaker, 12,000 jobs are at risk in and around the city of London. These are real jobs and real people, but I'm proud to say that Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC Party have been standing up and fighting on behalf of the horse racing industry since the Liberals, with the help of the NDP, pulled the rug out from under them. We've been clear, we haven't wavered, and we have not sat on our hands.

On April 26, 2012—11 months ago—I recall introducing my first piece of private member's business: a bill to ensure that a local municipal referendum would be held prior to the development of any new casino. You see, Speaker, our party and our leader Tim Hudak were the only party to have put forward a comprehensive plan to grow and develop Ontario's horse racing industry. Here's what we're going to do: We're going to cancel OLG's plan to abandon racetrack slots and we're going to scrap the Liberal plan to build 29 new casinos across the province of Ontario.

Let me be clear: The Ontario PCs will build on a successful partnership with Ontario's horse racing industry. Unlike the McGuinty-Wynne-Horwath government, our party is looking ahead and laying out our plans and our ideas to ensure that horse racing is a key component in Ontario's gaming strategy.

Again, over a year ago, the Liberals, working with the third party, united to pass their negotiated budget, killing the Slots at Racetracks partnership and risking the livelihoods of 60,000 men and women. We opposed the decision then, we've been standing up for the horse racing industry all along, and we will continue to support and advocate for the families and the jobs involved in the Ontario horse racing industry.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I want to know what it is about the Liberal government that they hate northern Ontario so badly. Why is it that they have to stick it to us every time they can?

We've had horse racing in Nickel Belt for as long as I can remember. For decades we've had horse racing. Now they stand up and say, "Whoa, we have an agreement with nine tracks." That does not include a track in northern Ontario. When they talk about, "Oh, the industry will be smaller," what they really mean is: "The industry will be concentrated in southern Ontario, and to hell with you guys in northern Ontario."

I don't accept this. I have families that depend on this industry. I have 200 people in Nickel Belt who are out of a job—200 families with little kids—that are out of a job because of what they did. It doesn't have to be like that; it doesn't have to be like that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to join in the debate. I want to welcome everyone here to our galleries today. Obviously, I'm going to be supporting the motion, as are my PC caucus colleagues.

Standing up for the horse racing industry is nothing new for our caucus, nothing new for me, certainly. I've been standing up for my constituents who are affected by this loss of the SARP program. I've also been standing up for the 400 jobs at the Thousand Islands casino and standing up against what this government is trying to do.

I want to remind you that it was this budget that made sure that the SARP cancellation continued. In a minority Parliament, it takes two to tango, so I want to make sure

we do acknowledge that the third party sat on their hands and were enablers in allowing this to happen.

I also want to tell the people who are in the crowd that at this 11th hour, we're going to stand up, we're going to support this motion and we're going to support you.

We've also tabled a motion at public accounts very similar to what Ms. MacLeod had tabled to send this whole cancellation of SARP, the bingo hall issue, the whole 29 new casinos to the Auditor General to have him investigate this. It will be debated on April 10, and I hope that the third party will support that motion at public accounts on April 10.

Just in closing, I want to remind members that the day I think was quite significant for the SARP program was June 20. Ladies and gentlemen, that's when 52 of you supported your budget, 35 of us stood against your budget and the third party sat on their hands.

You know what, Speaker? We've got maybe another NDP speaker. I know that the member for Essex has got two minutes to close. I think you owe it to the people in this crowd to apologize for sitting on your hands on June 20. That's what I think he should do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First of all, I want to commend my colleague from Essex for taking the lead on this issue. If anyone in this House has stood up for rural Ontario and the democratic rights of cities, it is this member.

In July 2010, the Liberal government set in motion this privatization machine, what the Globe and Mail has called one of the biggest privatizations in Ontario history. What do they want to do and what do the Tories want to do? They want to make sure that large, huge gambling corporations from Las Vegas come to Ontario, take the money out of this province and shut down the horse racing and the other businesses in this province. That's the outcome of the so-called OLG modernization.

1630

We're talking modernization. We're talking about sell-off. We're talking about transportation of tons of cash out of this province. OLG modernization is a reorientation of the whole gambling marketing to urban areas and young people. Read their document. Rural Ontario is ruled out; downtown Toronto is ruled in as the target market.

In this case, the Tories weren't as fast as the Liberals. The Liberals got in first on privatization. The Tories love the idea. They're following up as a strong, strong supporter on the idea of privatization. They may well vote for this today, but be well aware that it's that party that would sell off everything if they were in power.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I just want to remind the people here that this Saturday, March 30, is the final race at Kawartha Downs in Frserville in my area.

Interjection: Shame, shame.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It is shameful. They've been there for 40 years, so what they've built over the 40 years, this

Liberal government has taken one year to destroy—40 years of the horse racing industry—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

The member for Essex, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I appreciate the submissions by all members in this House, because it finally gives us the opportunity to put everybody on the record. Unfortunately, as I expected, I didn't hear the PC plan for casino expansion during this debate. I know that it's a full-blown expansion on privatization. But they weren't going to talk about it.

As I've said, this debate is not about the SAR program. It's about privatization, it's about market share, it's about big business coming in and eating that market share. That's what it was about.

I'll tell you, I'm not going to apologize, but I will thank the leader of my party for standing up this House when your leader couldn't show his face to support the horse racing industry.

Mr. Speaker, what you're learning, what the people are learning—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Prince Edward—Hastings, come to order.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'll keep standing until we have order.

The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Mr. Speaker, this is an emotional debate, and—

Mr. Tim Hudak: On a point of order: I just want to make the record clear that I am here in my seat supporting the horsemen. I just wish the member had done so in the budget last year when he sold out the horse racing industry—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. I just remind the leader that that's not a point of order.

The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: What I need people to understand, and I think what they've learned over this year, is that the politics that happen in this place matter, and the policies matter. The absolute initiatives that each party takes when it comes to all aspects of our government and all aspects of our province matter. They have a direct impact on people. And the privatization scheme that's currently going on under the OLG is the exact same plan that the opposition party would embark on, and if we don't support and we don't give them an opportunity to put that plan into place, that's another day that the horse racing industry gets to survive, and I'm proud of that.

Thank you very much for this debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

TAXPAYER PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONTRIBUABLES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal with the first ballot item, number 10, standing in the name of Mr. Hillier.

Mr. Hillier has moved second reading of Bill 19. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll take the vote at the end of regular business.

HELPING ONTARIANS ENTER THE SKILLED TRADES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À FACILITER L'ACCÈS AUX MÉTIERS SPÉCIALISÉS EN ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Dunlop has moved second reading of Bill 22. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll vote on that item at the end of regular business.

GAMING POLICY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Natyshak has moved private member's notice of motion number 15. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We'll take the vote. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1637 to 1642.

TAXPAYER PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONTRIBUABLES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would members please take their seats?

Mr. Hillier has moved second reading of Bill 19. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank

Nicholls, Rick
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy

Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim

Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad

Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Miller, Paul

Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhhar, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad

Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Miller, Paul

Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhhar, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 35; the nays are 54.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Open the doors for 10 seconds.

HELPING ONTARIANS ENTER THE SKILLED TRADES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À FACILITER L'ACCÈS AUX MÉTIERS SPÉCIALISÉS EN ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Dunlop has moved second reading of Bill 22. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Campbell, Sarah
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy

Horwath, Andrea
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Natyshak, Taras

Nicholls, Rick
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Prue, Michael
Schein, Jonah
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob

Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Gerretsen, John
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda

Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Qaadri, Shafiq

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic

Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil

Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 53; the nays are 33.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I
declare the motion carried.
Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders
of the day?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment
of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The
government House leader has moved adjournment of the
House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion
carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until April 8 at 10:30 a.m.
The House adjourned at 1655.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brook	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	London West / London-Ouest	
Vacant	Windsor–Tecumseh	

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Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Bill Mauro
Taras Natyshak, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
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Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
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Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
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Steve Clark, Mike Colle
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Joe Dickson, Randy Hillier
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Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Margaret R. Best
Ted Chudleigh, Cheri DiNovo
Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
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